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# *I Speak for Myself*

AN EDITOR IN HIS WORLD

*Edwin Francis Edgett*

With a Prefatory Note

By William Lyon Phelps

*New York · 1940*

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TO MY WIFE  
EVELYN TORREY EDGETT



# *Prefatory Note*

BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

DURING THE YEAR that I had the honour of being a member of the English Faculty at Harvard, 1891–1892, I had the pleasure of teaching sections of each of the four undergraduate classes in the College. In the large group of Sophomores of the Class of 1894, whom I endeavoured to teach—I certainly succeeded in *learning* a good deal—I gave out only two highest marks (A) in English Composition. It has always been a source of gratification to me that the two recipients were Lindsay Todd Damon and Edwin Francis Edgett; the former became the scholarly Professor of English at Brown University, and the latter spent nearly all his life as a professional literary and dramatic critic on the *Boston Evening Transcript*.

I used to criticise Edgett's themes; I now have before me the printed pages of his book. I am very glad the publishers persuaded him to write it (I know by experience that Mr. Harold Latham is a persuasive conversationalist). I find the book interesting from beginning to end: because the author's life as a professional journalist seems never to have had a dull day, and because he tells the story with zest and candour.

The book is well named *I Speak for Myself*. Its writer has strong convictions, some of them exceedingly unpopular, and

he takes delight in expressing them in a definite and uncompromising fashion. I can read with my mind's eye the violent and even abusive letters he will receive; but opposition has never troubled him. And for the majority of his opinions he should receive praise from many different classes of people.

He is an illustration of one of my most ardent faiths—that in mature years nothing is more exciting than a congenial routine. Children and dogs are happiest when something unusual happens, when there is a break in daily habits. It is just the opposite with those who have found a career where choice and ability harmonise. Mr. Edgett loved national holidays because then he could work at the regular task without fear of interruption.

In this book he has made even the smallest details of his daily newspaper work interesting. I suppose it is because everything connected with it interested *him*. His career as Literary Editor, as Dramatic Critic, not only gave him opportunities to say in print what was in his mind, but made him an enormously valuable member of society; for his discussions of books and plays were sincere and luminous. He pleased and stimulated many thousands of readers. And when for some years he discussed books over the radio, the response was so immediate and so widespread that I wonder why the educational experts in the broadcasting companies do not employ him now.

The letters he prints from famous authors are valuable contributions. But the real charm of these pages comes from the man himself; from his absolute honesty, from the range of his knowledge, from his ability to express his opinions and convictions with clearness. I can easily see how some readers will be angry and will violently dissent; but I don't see how any reader could possibly misunderstand him.

## *Introduction*

THIS BOOK is to me more than a surprise. It is an astonishment. When it was suggested, I was struck with amazement at the idea that anyone would want to read the story of my life. More than five years ago Harold S. Latham, vice president of The Macmillan Company, whom I have known for a long time through correspondence and occasional visits, asked me as he was leaving my office one day this unexpected question: "When are you going to let us see the manuscript of your autobiography?" I could scarcely speak, and the most I could say was to thank him for the inquiry, and then thrust aside the idea as if it were of no importance to myself or anyone else.

Apparently Mr. Latham was not discouraged, for he repeated the question whenever he saw me. Last year I succumbed and told him I would make a beginning at such a book, although I had no belief that it would amount to anything. For many weeks I worked on it in a desultory fashion, and then I found that I had accumulated about eighty typewritten pages. These I sent to him, at his request, with the thought that that would be the end of my story; but it was the beginning and not the end. I was emboldened by him to complete the manuscript, and it finally reached its present length of four times the original.



What its fate will be with the public I cannot foresee; nor can anyone foresee the fate of this book, or any other book. But here it is, to take its place in the unending procession of books. As will be seen, its pages contain my frank statement of what has happened to me in mind and soul and body through many years. It is intended to be a record of and commentary upon myself, my thoughts and beliefs, as well as a chronicle of events that have been a part of my life during all its successive stages. While it is long enough, perhaps too long, it might have been double the length, and even then I would not have told half my story; but it should be made no longer for the sake of both my readers and myself.

The record goes along all my years from birth to the present day. Although I have never travelled much, I have travelled far, always in the haunts of man. The story centres in Boston, where I was born. It carries me to London for about a year, and then it brings me back to my own country, to New York and Philadelphia and St. Louis, in the course of a tour not for recreation, but as a means for earning my living—which seems to have been my chief object in life up to about two years ago. At last I returned to Boston for good and all. There the greater part of my life has been spent, for with brief interruptions I was more than forty years on the editorial staff of the Boston Evening Transcript.

I have naturally much to say about my Transcript work, first as its dramatic editor and then as its literary editor, about the place and my companions there. Nobody who has worked on that newspaper can rid himself of the impression that he has been a factor in the making and progress of what was an extraordinary institution of national reputation as well as of local importance and influence.

This is the story, as the title page reads, of "an editor in his world." There is much more in it, however, for it deals with my connections with theatres, not as an actor, but as a

worker in their publicity and business interests, all of which I carried on simultaneously with and incidentally to my Transcript labors. It is reminiscent of my acquaintance with many people of the stage—notably with David Belasco, Henry Jewett, John Craig, and James K. Hackett (all of them dead and gone, alas!); and there is much in its pages of authors and their books—Charles Dickens, Anthony Trollope, George Gissing, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Conrad, etc.—of books themselves, of my letters from Arnold Bennett, Sinclair Lewis, Eden Phillpotts, Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, A. S. M. Hutchinson, Christopher Morley, William Lyon Phelps, Charles Townsend Copeland, Houdini, Booth Tarkington, and others of eminence in and out of the literary world.

It is, of course, no less reminiscent of myself. It contains the names, and something about the personalities of hundreds of human beings, known and unknown to the world at large, in all their varying walks of life. However it may be described by its readers, it cannot be said that the story lacks diversity, or that it fails to exemplify the truth of its title, "I Speak for Myself."

E. F. E.

September, 1940



**I SPEAK FOR MYSELF**





## *Where Was I Born?*

UNLESS THE WRITER of autobiography or reminiscences is a slave to the passion for novelty or originality (which too often fails of its purpose), he should reveal at the outset the place and date of his birth. These set the scene for the drama he is about to present, and enable him to face his audience the moment the curtain is rung up for his first appearance on his stage. Thereby he discloses himself before the footlights in the first act of a play that is likely to be not wholly a comedy or a tragedy, but a combination of both, with now and then the possibility of an element of farce.

Strange to say, it is difficult for me to identify my birthplace. Was ever man in such a dilemma? To be sure, I was born in Massachusetts, but was it in Roxbury or in Boston? What, it may sensibly be asked, is the reason for this puzzle, this enigma, this doubt, or whatever it may be called? The difficulty is due to the fact that Boston through all the years from 1630 to 1940 has had the continuous ambition to enlarge itself, characteristic of many American cities.

Roxbury, then and now a suburb of Boston, was on January 12, 1867, a city under its own local rule, with a mayor, a board of aldermen, and all the rest of the customary municipal paraphernalia. A few months after I was born it became an integral part of the city of Boston, thereby attaining

a distinction that at intervals has also been gained by other outlying districts of the capital city of Massachusetts. There was an epidemic of annexation especially prevalent in those bygone years when four or five suburbs were simultaneously taken under its sheltering governmental wing.

Hence this mystery about the place of my birth, a mystery doubtless shared by other Bostonians of my time, although I happen never to have met any of them. I repeat the question: Was I born in Roxbury, or was I born in Boston? I may say at one moment that my birthplace was Boston, and at another that it was Roxbury; and while I may seem to be inconsistent or inaccurate, I shall be telling the truth, either way. On the whole, I prefer to call myself a Bostonian, even if I have not always lived within its present borders.

One thing is certain, however, since I am inclined to accept the word of my father and mother that my awakening to the fact of my existence was on a definite date: I do know where to place myself on the calendar. It was, as I have said, the twelfth day of January, 1867. Unlike too many others, I do not hesitate to reveal the day, the month and the year of my birth. Nor am I at all reluctant to acknowledge that it was a long time ago, away back in the dim past of the nineteenth century—so far indeed that, as I looked forward during my boyhood towards the years to come, I felt I could not possibly survive to reach on January 12, 1901, the great age of thirty-four at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Some of my contemporaries who were born in the late sixties or the early seventies may remember that legendary personage known as Mother Shipton who was reported to have foretold the day when "carriages without horses will go," and also to have predicted that "the world to an end shall come in 1881." In the first of these portents she was certainly right; but the second was a reckless leap into the dark abysses of prophecy. The Millerites, a branch of the Second Adventists, had years before taken the same venturesome look

into futurity, only to meet with the laughter and derision of their antagonists when the eventful day passed without catastrophe. With no thought of Mother Shipton's imperfect rhyme, or the confusion of her use of "will" and "shall," but with a keen juvenile fear of something untoward to come before I was many years older, I naturally rejoiced when the last day of 1881 carried the world safely on its journey around the sun. No doubt there were other youngsters who shared with me that satisfactory assurance against what they thought was an impending terrestrial disaster.



## 2

### *Where I Was Not Born*

MY MEMORIES extend also to the house where I was born, although I left it at the age of less than three years, before I can remember anything. I have seen that house many times since, for surprising as it may seem in these days of restless change, it is still standing in Roxbury, only a few miles away on the other side of Boston from where I am now living, in Arlington (which is not a part of the great city). Arlington was once a section of Cambridge, first under its Indian name of Menotomy, and later as West Cambridge. Finally its name was altered to its present designation, probably because that sounded well, much better than Menotomy, which with its resemblance to "monotony" would have subjected its residents to many more or less merry jests. Arlington still retains its town government despite the fact that its population has reached the high mark of almost 40,000, and has taken upon itself a bustling citified air, with its acres of market gardens cut up into small and crowded building lots upon which new houses arise almost overnight.

I rejoice to add that Arlington is the town where I have passed some of the happiest days of my life, with my wife, to whom I was married in 1896, about two years after the end of our schooling at Harvard and Wellesley. Those years in Arlington now compass more than thirty-five. Prior to that I

had dwelt in Roxbury, Boston proper, Dorchester, Cambridge, Somerville, London, New York, Medford, and Brookline—certainly a notable itinerary through the passing of the years. But I still consider myself a native and resident of Boston, as do a multitude of others who have not always had their homes within its municipal confines. As a matter of fact, if all the Boston suburban cities and towns—two of which, Cambridge and Somerville, have each a population of over one hundred thousand—were joined to the greater city in the manner of so many outlying districts of New York or Chicago, it would number about a million and a half inhabitants.

My birth was before the days when practically all babies were condemned to be born in hospitals, yet in spite of that supposed handicap—for we are told that hospital births are likely to be especially beneficial to both mothers and children—I have managed to live comfortably all these seventy-three years. It may be of no importance to anyone but myself, but, despite this reputed natal disadvantage, I have never had a serious illness in my life. Human beings live longer now, so statisticians tell us, than in any recorded epoch of world history (I am not thinking of the legendary Methuselah or other Biblical heroes), and perhaps hospitals are responsible for that state of affairs. The doctors at least are happier, for it is easier for them to go to a hospital when they are summoned in the dead of night upon a sudden but not unexpected call. But now, so far has the world progressed, the telephone does the work of the once fleet-footed messenger who was forced, in the phrase of long ago, "to run for the doctor." And speaking of hospitals, I am glad to say that I have never been in a hospital, except as a visitor, and even then not often. I have such a dislike and dread of them that I know my chances of recovery would be lessened if I were forced to lie in bed within their doors, even if compelled to submit to the ministrations of the most gracious nurse.

# 3

## *In Suburban Boston*

HERE I AM, therefore, after having been born, seated at this moment before my typewriter—something also that was unknown until long after my birth—and now adding the role of autobiographer to the other characters I have played on the stage of my life; but I have not been able, like the actor, to recover my part in this reminiscent undertaking by the aid of the midnight oil, gaslight or electricity, and am now forced, without the help of a diary, and with only limited notes and casual memoranda, to summon the past out of the fathomless wells of my memory. Fortunately, I have preserved many letters received from men and women of literature and the theatre, and some of them will appear in my later pages.

The Boston of my youth, or rather the suburb of Boston known as Roxbury, was an interesting place for a boy to grow up in, much more attractive and less crowded than it is today. At that time, it was really a country town, even although closely joined to Boston. It was impossible to tell, so closely built were its streets, where one city became the other; but its outlying districts had a rural air, with gardens, farms and estates that seemed to be many miles away from its urban edges. Yet I lived only three-quarters of an hour from town by horse-drawn carriages, wagons or street cars. Boston had no elevated railroads or subways then, and the

automobile was not to come for more than a quarter of a century. Many of us are old-fashioned enough to think those less speedy days were preferable to these, when everybody seems to be constantly on the move, and garages are as common as houses.

Roxbury is very hilly, as are also some of the other Boston suburbs, and my journeys to and from school and church (the latter a subject I shall take up later) were along the ascent and descent of a street upon which ran those now outmoded yet picturesque vehicles known as horse cars. This street went by easy stages from the foot of a hill now the centre of the bustling Dudley Street station of the elevated and subway transportation system of Boston, by which the traveller goes rapidly on a ten-minute journey between Roxbury and the heart of the great city.

Even two horses were not considered powerful enough to draw a car up Warren Street at its longest and steepest inclines, extra traction being provided by a tow horse attended by a boy who hitched the animal to a ring on the forward end of the car beside his two equine companions. When the top of the ascent was reached, the horse was unfastened and immediately descended to his starting place, where with the boy he awaited the next car that needed his aid. This would happen several times during the journey between Dudley Street and Grove Hall, the terminus of the horse-car line. Everything beyond this was more country than suburb. It was great sport to watch this odd proceeding, although I doubt if any boy had a thought of its help to the horses.

These old-time horse cars were short, open in summer with transverse seats, and closed in winter with the seats along the sides. Some of the open cars, known as double-deckers, were two-storied, thus giving to the passengers a wider view of the surrounding country and the scenery along the way. Years later, when we went to London to live for a short time, I found there the same two-storied means of conveyance both

summer and winter, but by means of horse-drawn buses now replaced by motor. In the winter, these Roxbury horse-car passengers were supposed to be made especially comfortable by straw scattered over the floor. It was intended to keep the feet warm, but as may be readily imagined it was a damp, disagreeable and noisome mess on a wet day. The drivers, be it noted, stood on an open platform throughout the year, and were subjected directly to the effects of all the winds and storms that blew from the four quarters of heaven.

Long years were to pass before these servants of the corporations and the public were permitted to stand on a glass-protected indoor platform, with the doors, the motive power, and the brake-control all operated by electricity through a slight touch of the driver's hand instead of a forceful push or pull. His work is less now in energy and time, and his wages are higher, although the too common attitude towards it, fostered by labor unionism, is that he is still oppressed and downtrodden. Since the company that operated these Roxbury cars was known as the Highland Street Railway Company (there had been a foolish and futile attempt to change the name of Roxbury to Boston Highlands) the cars were painted with plaid designs imitating the insignia of the Scottish clans, but somewhat inconsistently such Indian names as Shawmut, Pequot, Sachem and Massasoit were painted upon their sides in brilliant colored lettering.

# 4

## *The Edgetts and the Prays*

ALL THIS IS of course but a fragment of my boyhood recollections of Roxbury. In fact, all my memories of my early years are very meagre. I am often amazed, and somewhat incredulous, when I am told by grown-ups of occurrences at the time they were scarcely more than infants. I myself have little remembrance of anything that happened to me before I was nine or ten, except of the summers we spent in New Hampshire. Even then I suspect that that portion of my past comes mainly to my mind from what I was told about it afterwards. And so must it be with others.

After the customary era of primary, grammar and high school in and around Boston (for the scene of my education was changed hither and thither), the dawn of my future loomed above the horizon. For a time I stood with the hesitant feet of youth trying to decide whither I would walk in my grown-up life. But as I lingered at the crossroads, I looked towards the vista of a congenial profession. I was not one of those young men who were willing to accept whatever chance might set before them. I was not content simply to earn my living. I would not be satisfied with anything. I had no inclination towards business, and no desire to follow my father in his building trade, although I have nothing but the pleasantest recollections of the days when I sat beside him

in the horse-drawn wagon that enabled him to get from one to another bit of construction.

I also remember many rides, with my mother and sister together on the back seat of the carriage—not a buggy, but the variety of pleasure vehicle known as a carryall—and I with my father on the front seat as he held the reins. We would journey through the suburbs and out into the country, taking frequent trips from Roxbury across Brookline to see our relatives in Cambridge. Those rides filled a much longer time then than they would now, when by motor car it is only a half-hour or less. For a while during my infancy and early childhood my father was very successful in his undertakings, and we were able to pass our vacations amid the White Mountains, where we spent many happy days looking at the Old Man of the Mountain, or “the Great Stone Face,” as Hawthorne calls it, the Flume, Echo Lake, Franconia Notch, and the other scenic attractions of that beautiful region. Years later I was with my wife to visit and make close acquaintance with another and equally picturesque section of New Hampshire: Mount Monadnock and its near-by scenes.

In the midst of my early youth, when my father was over forty, his business went sadly awry, and his prosperity never returned, for although a capable man, he had no aptitude for the making of money. He had come from New Brunswick in early life with his mother, sisters and brothers (his father died long before I was born) first to Eastport, Maine, and therefrom to make their home in Boston. The greater number of these relatives lived in East Boston, but my branch of the family made Roxbury their haven, and my uncle Isaac and his family chose Beverly for their home. Another uncle, captain of a merchant vessel who was lost at sea, and whom I never knew, has descendants living in Michigan, a state I myself have never visited.

Off and on in the shipping news in the daily newspapers I see a report of a vessel or of a sea captain bearing the name of

Edgett. All these members of the Edgett family were descended from two brothers, Joel and John Edgett, who had migrated to New Brunswick from New York shortly after the Revolution. They were Tories, otherwise more respectfully known as Loyalists, and I have many relatives remaining in New Brunswick who are of course still British subjects. With none of these have I any personal acquaintance, I am sorry to say. There are also Edgetts in central New York state, and I have discovered during my not very assiduous genealogical researches that there is an Edgett Street in the Pennsylvania town of Bradford. I have only a few near relatives, all of them cousins, on either side of my family.

My mother was also of Canadian birth, although not of Canadian ancestry, but she and my father did not meet until they came to Boston. She was born in the little town of Bedford in the Province of Quebec, not far from the Vermont border. The family lived at one time and another on both sides of the border, and once, so my mother told me, her father had a house and country store exactly on the international line, making it necessary for him to keep his American goods on one side of the building, and the Canadian goods on the other, in order to avoid trouble with the customs authorities. What could have happened to the customers when they left the store, I fail to see.

It may be that this dominant British ancestry is one reason why I have always been prepossessed in favor of England during her many national and international difficulties. No matter what the quarrel was about, or what other nation it was with, I have always wanted Great Britain to win. In these days when the structure of our country is being undermined by dictatorial administrative hands, and by arbitrary labor unionism, I feel that it would be better for us and the world if this stricken land of ours had never been severed from its mother country. At any rate, and no one can take it away from us, we are of English heritage, and we speak the



English language, which is a great deal to our advantage and our credit. I violently oppose all references to the "American language." No matter what the failings of the English may be, no one can offend me by taking me for an Englishman, which often happens.

There is something more about my mother's ancestry, which I did not discover until a few years ago. Her maiden name was Pray, and I learned from a cousin who was California-born, but who had come East to make her home in Boston, and who had delved deeply into genealogical mysteries, that the name is not the English word of significant meaning, but the Anglicization of the French word *prés*, which, as all who are familiar with the first lines of Longfellow's "Evangeline" know, means "meadow." On the other side, my mother's grandfather bore the name of Martin, and was of Dutch descent, and there was a rumor in the family that they were among the many descendants of the Dutch settler Anneke Jans, wife of Everardus Bogardus, whose children and grandchildren became involved in the notorious claim to the Trinity Church property in lower Manhattan. I have never taken this dispute seriously. If all this be true about my ancestry both maternal and paternal, I have a mixture of English, French, Dutch and undoubtedly other blood in my veins.

Another happy reminiscence of my boyhood turns me back to the two months I spent with relatives in the New Brunswick town of Hillsborough, my father's birthplace on the banks of the Petitcodiac River, where there is a little village and postoffice called Edgett's Landing. This was in 1879. Although distant from its mouth in the Bay of Fundy, the Petitcodiac River at Hillsborough is subject to the famous tides of that arm of the Atlantic Ocean, and I never weary of telling how their ebb and flow impressed me by a daily view of its changing width from about a mile at high tide to creek-size at low tide. It was a striking sight to watch from the up-

lands of the town, along which ran its main street, the waters of the river broaden and narrow. The region round about Hillsborough was also famous for its plaster products, and for its anthracite mines, from which was dug a coal of almost startling brilliancy. I visited them more than once with young companions rather hazardously by means of open platform cars on railroad freight trains. Fortunately, our trips resulted in no disasters. My visit to Hillsborough was the furthest journey I made from Boston until exactly twenty years later when I went with my wife to live in London.

# 5

## *Names and Nicknames*

PARENTHETICALLY, I want to say at this point, lest I be misunderstood by the emphasis I shall place upon our antagonistic religious viewpoints, that we were a happy family. There were four of us, father, mother, daughter and son, and I have been the sole survivor for the past seven years. My father died in 1904 at the age of sixty-eight on his fortieth wedding anniversary; my mother died at the age of sixty-six, just four days short of a year later, on my wife's birthday; my sister died in 1933 at the age of sixty-three. She had lived with us continuously after our return from London in 1901. Upon my father had been bestowed the Biblical name of Reuben, and none could have been more unwelcome to him, especially after its nickname of "Rube" had become the common appellation of an uncouth rustic. His four brothers were named Hiram, George, Isaac and William, with the Biblical names in the majority. His two sisters were Ruth and Elizabeth, two more Biblical names. His mother's name was Ruth Gross, and his father rejoiced in the unusual name of Handy-side Peck Edgett.

It was not uncommon in those days to give a child a nickname as if it were an authentic Christian name, and although my sister was named Lizzie, she sensibly preferred to be known as Elizabeth, and after her maturity always so signed

herself. She never married. Too many children are given these undignified nicknames—Harry, Fred, Tom, Jim, Nellie, Jennie, Maggie, etc. I have a cousin who was named Willie, but his signature is of course William. My own first name came from an uncle, father of the aforesaid William, and husband of my mother's older sister; my middle name was from an army chum of my father, and my pet name from as far back as I can remember has been Eddie. I have not the slightest objection to being called that; in fact the older I grow the more friends use it whenever they speak to or refer to me, but I certainly never use it in writing.

These family names are of no especial importance, even to me, but there is in them a certain amount of personal and general interest. In any event, I repeat that we were a happy family, and during all the passing years I remember all three with love and affection. If there had been more of us, perhaps that could not be said. Four in a family is enough for me. Our religious differences were a temporary and passing phase of the days now far past. As for punishment, I never suffered that humiliation, and it was lucky for everybody concerned, for nothing infuriates me so much as to be given it, parental or otherwise.

This is the moment for me to say that I am fond of having my own way, and of thinking I am right in all circumstances. I am easily upset by opposition, and I cannot endure discipline, whether or not justifiable. Therefore I would not make a good soldier, and undoubtedly would be shot for insubordination before I had been in the ranks a month. Neither could I be a good officer, for it would be inconsistent and impossible for me to administer discipline to others. Even mere supervision is obnoxious to me. I consider that when I am requested to do a piece of work of which I am capable, I should be let alone to do it as I please. This does not mean that I am impervious to advice, for often I welcome it, although I refuse to look upon it as an order. I was

granted an independence and freedom in my Transcript position for so many years that near its end I could not endure the authority of a newcomer that seemed to imply I did not understand the technique of my work. An amount of red tape ensnarled us so intricately that we were frequently at our wits' end almost ready to leave the place to its fate. We knew what we were supposed to do, and how to do it, better than any interlopers. But that is a later aspect of my story.

# 6

## *I Am a Republican*

ONE OF THE MOST VIVID of my boyhood recollections of what was happening beyond the gates that opened into the world outside of Boston, Roxbury and Cambridge, where I was living then, goes back to the summer of 1881. On Saturday July 2nd, within less than four months of his inauguration, President Garfield was passing through the Union Station in Washington, accompanied by James G. Blaine, his Secretary of State, when as he was about to board a train he was assassinated by a disappointed office-seeker. The news came to the world and myself that afternoon, and then followed more than two months of suspense while the wounded president lay, now retreating from, now advancing towards, the inevitable doors of death, within sight of the Atlantic Ocean at Elberon, New Jersey, whither he had been taken in the hope that the sea air would benefit him. But he died on September 19th, and was succeeded by the Vice President, Chester A. Arthur, who served as executive with much greater skill and statemanship than anyone had credited him with possessing. I was going to school in Cambridge at that time, and this is merely one of a succession of political incidents that cling fast in my memory.

That was also the summer when the greater part of New England was darkened by atmospheric conditions that re-

sulted in the never-to-be-forgotten "Yellow Day" of 1881. It came in September, and certain superstitious persons imagined it to have some relation to the fate of the stricken president who lay on his deathbed many miles away in New Jersey. As if that were possible! There is no accounting for or understanding of the incredible illusions of man, no matter whether he live in the jungles of Africa or the eastern United States.

At first my ambitions for a professional career were divided between the somewhat allied directions of the law and journalism. Many men of more or less eminence have shifted from one to the other of these professions, but why the law beckoned to me, as I thought, I cannot now understand, except that possibly it seemed to be the highroad to a knowledge of public affairs and politics, in which I have always been keenly interested. But journalism leads likewise in the same direction. To this day I look first of all in the daily newspapers for the political tidings of the hour.

My father had been a soldier in the Civil War—merely a private in the 45th Massachusetts Regiment, Company A. It must be remembered, to account in part for my early lively interest in the momentous struggle that saved the Union, that I passed my boyhood within ten years of the surrender of the rebel forces under General Lee to the Union armies under General Grant at Appomattox. I am proud to say that the victory of the Union over the Confederacy has always been an important factor in my knowledge of American history, and that I followed in the paternal footsteps of Republicanism. The Democratic party took its place in my father's mind, and has forever remained in mine, as the enemy we had fought and conquered.

My Republicanism, however, is not the result of my father's political principles and influence, but comes through my own sincere and everlasting convictions. He would have been sorely distressed had I deserted the Republicans to become a

Democrat, but there was no fear of that. He despised the Democrats before, during and after the Civil War, and so did and so do I, from Secession to New Dealism. I have said many times, to myself and to others, and I shall continue to say as long as there are words for me to speak or write, that under no circumstances whatever will I vote for a candidate of the Democratic party. That is partisanship, I know, but I believe in partisanship, and in taking sides upon all problems, whether political, social, economic or religious. If I am not satisfied with a Republican candidate for any office, I simply refuse to vote for him, but I will not vote for his Democratic opponent, or for any other opponent. That is the only logical, the only faithful, the only consistent way.

On the other hand, I detest many states of mind, but none more than the independent or the neutral, especially the neutral. If there is anyone who is more despicable than the neutral, the man who has no opinion, or if he has one is unwilling to declare it, I do not know how to describe him. Primarily he is a coward. It is better to be a Democrat than to be one of these. Of course I will vote for a Democrat in a non-party municipal election, when he does not stand for what he may call the principles of his party, but I dislike to do it. And if you hear a man bragging that he is an independent or a liberal, you may be sure that he does not understand the meaning or the implication of those words. The true independent or the true liberal has no need to voice to the world the fact that he is one.



## *Elections and Battles*

I WAS BROUGHT UP on the daily reading of the evening edition of the Boston Journal, a now departed newspaper that was for many years the official organ of the Republican party in New England. It was a long time before I saw any other newspaper. The Journal came into the control of Frank A. Munsey when he was engaged in the business of absorbing and disposing of daily newspapers in more than one city, and later it was purchased by the Boston Herald, which is to a modified degree its Republican successor. The thrill of those days when I awakened to the significance of American history, especially during presidential campaigns, continues to surge through my veins as I recall the political battles of the seventies, the eighties and the nineties.

I used to go downtown with my father to the newspaper district, where were displayed on the evening of election day the returns from the voting places throughout city, state and country, and watch the figures as they were thrown by stereopticon on a white sheet fastened to buildings across the street from the newspaper offices. My father and I were both in a state of great excitement as the vote would fluctuate now for and now against our desires. In later years, after I had begun work at the Transcript, I would be inside the building, instead of on the sidewalk, looking comfortably through the

window at the returns as they came out in white and black on the screen across Milk Street on the Old South Meeting House tower.

I am sure that I was never more a victim of political disappointment than when after three days following the presidential election of 1884 the decision was given to Cleveland over Blaine by the counting of the vote of New York state by a scant one thousand majority. That count was and will always remain questionable. Later there came a similar disappointment in 1892 when Harrison was defeated for re-election, and again in 1916 when Hughes was declared defeated by Wilson by a meagre majority. But how I had rejoiced at several of the preceding Republican victories, and later in 1920, 1924 and 1928 when the Democratic party went down in a series of overwhelming and legitimate defeats! On the whole, I have rejoiced more often than I have lamented in presidential years. If anything is said about the future, a day of reckoning is sure to come. The good of the country demands a suppression of the results of eight years of disastrous political dictation.

Considering the results of the "disputed election" of 1876, which is always certain to arise whenever we are thinking about the problems of presidential elections, I have something emphatic to say. I have no contemporary recollection of it, for I was too young to have a part in it, but I am certain that Hayes became the rightfully elected president, as well by the popular poll as by the decision of the Electoral Commission. That was a device, originated and carried through by the Democrats in Congress, in their efforts to make secure an election that was not theirs. The vote in favor of that Commission was in the House of Representatives 158 Democrats and 33 Republicans, and against it 18 Democrats and 68 Republicans; in the Senate the vote was 26 Democrats and 21 Republicans in favor, and 1 Democrat and 16 Republicans against. I obtain these figures from Edward Stanwood's

authoritative book, "A History of the Presidency." In the face of them, if the Electoral Commission was not a Democratic measure, what was it? Of course the Democratic party have not ceased to be bitter about it, for they were hoist by their own petard. They inconsistently deride the "eight to seven" verdict of the members of the Commission that gave to Hayes the election, but how they would have rejoiced had the eight been in their favor! It would have been an "eight to seven" decision just the same.

Not a word is said by these same Democrats of the justifiable, or rather the undeniable, fact that, if it had not been for the suppression of the legal Republican vote in the Southern states, the result in November, 1876, would have been unquestionably a majority for Hayes. That same suppression has been repeated at every subsequent election, from 1880 to 1936, and it will be true again in 1940. It might be well if the American electorate would read the fifteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States: "The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude." That is explicit, and I am not reluctant to declare that anyone who says that his right to vote is not denied or abridged in the Southern states does not know the meaning of the word Truth.

It matters not, however, what may be the result of an election, I have always rejoiced and I shall continue to rejoice, in a political campaign. "He paweth in the valley," says Job in one of his most vehement moments, "and rejoiceth in his strength; he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the sword." I not only smell a political contest from afar, but I revel in the odor of it from close quarters, and regret that elections have become more infrequent the older I grow. The proposition to extend the presidential term to six years, and to shorten the quadrennial campaigns by holding the nom-

inating conventions later, leaves me cold. The oftener and the longer the better, say I, disregarding the economical reasons for making any change. The thunder of the political captains and the shouting of the men in the ranks during election times help to make life worth living for me.

# 8

## *An Editor in My Teens*

IT WAS FORTUNATE for others as well as for myself that I did not go into the law, for I am certain that I should have been the worst lawyer that ever raised his voice in the courts, or sat in the seats of counsel, not to mention on the bench. Journalism at last became fixed in my mind as my destiny, and thereafter I made it my unchangeable goal, with the hope of advancing, as has been the ambition of many a young journalist, into authorship and literature. It was my fate, however, and not a regrettable fate either, to be engaged in newspaper work as editor and writer more than fifty years. While I was in my teens, I began to write for publication, with a welcome here and there from editors who were hospitable to my efforts, especially when they could print them for nothing, or infrequently in return for a small check that brought me little more than a faint breeze of financial encouragement. A beginner in journalism must always be willing to do a considerable amount of unpaid work.

Among my earliest journalistic diversions was the making of puzzles with their solutions; the editing and publishing of a little paper called the Bay State Puzzler in partnership with a young man who lived in a country town in the midst of New York state, and whom I never saw until years later when he called upon me at my desk in the Transcript editorial

rooms for a short talk about the dear departed days when we were younger. This puzzle-making in which we were engaged was much more varied in style and ingenuity than the modern form of cross words that has come to be the present-day rage. My mail at that time was very heavy, and while I was going through a mass of well preserved letters and postal cards not long ago, preparatory to their destruction, I was amazed to discover how I must have labored in reading and answering them. They dated away back into the eighties of the nineteenth century, and I had kept them all in their original envelopes, while their postmarks ranged from Maine to California, from Canada to Louisiana.

What to do with them was at first a puzzle—and should I really fulfill my first intention of destroying them? I did not hesitate long, but solved that puzzle by committing them to the flames of a convenient fireplace. Why had I kept them; why should I continue to keep them? Because it was my habit, I suppose, to preserve everything that came into my hands, whether useful or useless. In addition to editing the Bay State Puzzler, I also served without compensation as editor of puzzle departments in several religious and agricultural weekly papers. Indeed, so unrestrained was my passion for doing any kind of newspaper work, that I even, at my own solicitation, took charge of a number of notes and queries departments in other papers, in some cases furnishing the questions, if they did not come in fast enough, as well as the answers.

This amateur journalistic epoch must have continued about ten years. I had been led into it, especially the puzzles, by the diligent reading of a popular juvenile story paper, *Golden Days*, which I bought every Saturday at a news-stand from its first issue in 1880 for some eight or nine following years. I long had in my safe possession seven volumes of it which I went to the trouble and expense of having bound. They were kept in my attic for about thirty years, and now

to conserve my space they are deposited in the Harvard College Library. I used to take pleasure in turning their pages and thereby bringing back the past by looking over the stories signed with the once familiar names of Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, Harry Castlemon, Edward S. Ellis and all the other popular writers for boys who reigned half a century ago. Frank R. Stockton appeared in *Golden Days* with at least one serial story during the earlier days of his fame.

I shall never forget that in *Golden Days* my first printed words appeared in the form of a short story. For it I received a check for \$5.00, which seemed to me at that time to be a small fortune. Another paper of the type of *Golden Days* was founded at about the same time by Frank A. Munsey, then unknown and unheralded in the ranks of newspaperdom. He called it *The Golden Argosy*, a title obviously suggested by *Golden Days*, and I read it also with no less eagerness. I have a vague recollection of seeing Munsey not long afterwards on several occasions in the advertising agency where I was working, as he went on his way between his native Maine and New York, doubtless even then with the hope of reaching the high estate and financial prosperity to which he finally rose.

# 9

## *Going to the Play*

DURING ALL THIS TIME, I had been no less interested in religion than in politics. There, unlike our union in political beliefs, I was at variance with my parents. They were Baptists, and I can assure you that the Baptists of those days of the seventies, eighties and nineties were even stronger in their faith than the name of the denomination now implies. They were thoroughgoing Fundamentalists, although that word was not then an epithet for the ultraorthodox. Both father and mother were recent converts to the Baptist creed, and they had all the intense enthusiasm of the proselyte. They looked upon a church of any denomination as the house of God, and upon the theatre as the habitation of the Devil. With one exception, when they were over-persuaded by a friend who one evening took me to the old Boston Museum, I never entered a theatre until I was almost twenty. I atoned for that later.

By the way, that home of a nationally famous stock company, then already in existence for about fifty years, was viewed by the religious-minded as an institution not quite so bad as other places of dramatic entertainment. But in spite of its name, it was a theatre, like all the other theatres in Boston. It had been established in the forties as a combined museum and playhouse, with paintings, statuary, curi-



osities and other works of art or allied with the arts in a hall through which the patrons passed on their way to the auditorium with its stage and footlights. Those museum features were secondary to its purposes as a theatre, but as the years went by few of its patrons took the time or the trouble to inspect them. The Museum audiences went there for no other purpose than to see the plays. Yet these subordinate attractions remained until the closing of the theatre in 1901, when it was dismantled and taken down; the Kimball Building, named for the family that owned the property, arose in its place and is still standing for store and office purposes.

The leading members of the Boston Museum Stock Company, which of course changed its personnel from season to season, included some of the foremost American actors. Among them were Mrs. Vincent, Annie Clarke, Charles Barron, George W. Wilson and especially William Warren, who was one of its chief attractions during his notable career there of fifty years. This long record is not matched in the history of American acting or the American theatre. With many, a visit to the Boston Museum was merely to see Warren act, no matter what the play or his role. He was the son of another William Warren, an eminent actor who had come over from England in his youth, and who was for a long time a leading light of the Philadelphia stage. The younger Warren was a second cousin of Joseph Jefferson. And the local celebrity of Mrs. Vincent, who was of English birth, was so enduring that a club of society young women and a hospital were founded in her memory and are now in active existence.

Quite consistently, in view of my later connection with the theatrical profession after I became literary editor of the Transcript, it was about the stage, plays and players that I began to write in earnest for publication. I took to the subject as though I had been born in the atmosphere of the theatre, which was certainly not true. I began a round of

playgoing that continued uninterruptedly until the era of motion pictures narrowed its appeal in many minds, and thereby weakened my interest in the drama. Even now, when real plays seem to be tending to come into their own again, despite the more universal appeal and lesser expense of going to the motion pictures, my visits to a theatre of any kind are but seldom. Despite the wide range of scenes on the screen, I do not care for its form of entertainment, to put it mildly. They confront my eyes as merely faint illusions of plays as they are acted by real men and women.

The motion picture misrepresentations, especially of plots and stories taken from books and plays, are often appalling. Some time ago I went to see a picture on the screen purporting to be Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet," but early in the course of its display I discovered that I had been deceived by its widely heralded appeal as a production of that great tragedy. On the contrary, it was such a deliberate distortion of the play that I, and the friend with me, were unable to sit through it to the end. The panoramic pictures at its beginning were perhaps pardonable, although they had little relevance to the story, but we did not remain long after a balcony scene in which Romeo was so far below Juliet that he could not have reached her without a fire-ladder. Our derision was also aroused by another scene in which Romeo, after the slaying of Mercutio, chased Tybalt through miles and miles of the streets of Verona. The actual tragedy of all this is that so many in the audience were deluded into thinking they had seen Shakespeare's play. I have seen only one or two motion pictures since, and I have little intention of going to another. But you never can tell! That they are a great recreational institution there is no doubt, although I fear they fill too much of the time of both the younger generation and their elders.

*At Church and Sunday School*

I SEEM HERE to have gone off from the subject of religion, as frequently happens when politics, the theatre, and other favorite subjects lead me elsewhere. I hope, however, it has been a pardonable excursion. Now I return to the religious phase of my early life. Religion was certainly one of the most vital influences of my childhood, especially in its effect of enforced church and Sunday School going upon the mind of a boy such as I, who had ideas and a will of his own that refused to be held in parental subjection. As I have said, my parents were Baptists, and their zeal for religion and its formal observances was unlimited and immeasurable. With them the Baptist denomination was the custodian of the inmost truths of Christianity. I was supposed not to read fiction on Sunday, and but a limited amount of it on any day. As may be easily imagined, I frequently failed to heed their commands or desires. Towards and into my teens, I was compelled to "go to church" twice or thrice every Sunday, of course once to Sunday School, and to prayer meeting at least once a week. How I especially loathed this, with its "testimonies" of the newly captured converts!

All this was at the Dudley Street Baptist Church in Roxbury, then and still a bulwark of the Protestant faith in its most orthodox form. It has had many pastors of varying

competency during all the years since the 1870s. The pastor in my time was the Rev. Henry M. King, whose career as a highly esteemed clergyman was a credit to the denomination he represented. It is a pity that all his fellow preachers of any faith are not as sincere and personable as he. One of the later Dudley Street pastors was the Rev. Thomas Dixon, Jr., who attained considerable repute as a novelist, and who was the author of the book that originated the famous motion picture known as "The Birth of a Nation."

I resented all this compulsory church attendance because I was forced to listen to the preaching of doctrines from the pulpit, and to remarks of the teachers from the benches of the Sunday School, for which I had from the first an intense dislike in an increasing mood of unbelief. I was not allowed to answer or even to ask for elucidation or explanation. Many of these so-called teachers knew little about the history or the origin of the doctrines of the Bible. They were simply ardent defenders of a faith they accepted without reservation, and were ignorant of the history or fundamentals of the religion they took delight in voicing to immature minds. It was a trial for me to be denied the right of answering them by an expression of my own opinions, which I was certain were as good as theirs, even though I was younger. If I attempted to "talk back," I was looked upon as impertinent and audacious, but it was an act that once in a while I ventured upon.

One of the clergymen whom I sat under and was forced to listen to at a church in Cambridge was a venerable old man. Doubtless he was not as old as he seemed to my young eyes. He was of the type known as "Pulpit Thumper," and he made it clear to all his congregation, as he thought, that we were on the broad way to eternal damnation if we failed to heed his admonitions. Even to this day there are clergymen like him, for I have heard them over the radio. The Sunday School teachers were filled with a like enthusiasm,

but they were feebly equipped mentally to deliver their message with conviction to alert minds. Naturally I suffered not a little from them on many a Sabbath.

I felt that I was being taken at an unfair advantage. Was it right that I should not be allowed to have a mind of my own? Why could I not oppose these preachers and teachers, at least mildly? All this went on for some years, increasing my opposition to orthodox doctrines. My parents failed, as have many other parents, to understand that their methods were not the most effective for inculcating their religious beliefs in the minds of children. Their intentions were good, but they produced a contrary effect upon me. I knew I was young, to be sure, but I knew I had brains.

This is well remembered as a period when there was an epidemic among children to become "converted," chiefly under the threat of Hell, and to have them "join the church" by the baptismal rite of immersion. I refused to submit to all the appeals that were dinned into my ears, and since I would not join them in their watery ceremony, which has always seemed absurd to me, I was looked upon as one of the unregenerate who were destined to the horrible fate of eternal punishment. Children brought up in other denominations were "christened" in their infancy, but since the Baptists do not believe in "infant baptism" I was not in my innocence forced to submit to it. Of that, let me say, I am glad, and therefore there was some consolation in my connection with a Baptist family. I was called many names, especially atheist, which was false and which I have never been. I resented that epithet, as much as I objected to being called a Christian. Especially was I indignant when I was told: "You're a Christian, but you don't know it." As if that were possible!



## *My Religious Secession*

MY ANTIPATHETIC STATE OF MIND grew worse and worse, from the parental point of view, but better and better from mine. I revolted from practically all the ideas I heard from preacher and teacher, and more than all else I took an increased offence at the doctrine of Hell. I did not believe in it then, and I do not believe in it now. It seems to me to be little better than an insane delusion, especially as part of a religion that preaches an omniscient and beneficent God. I was told that I should be cast into its fires if I did not have "a change of heart" and "join the church," in other words if I did not believe what to me was absolutely unbelievable. Very few Christians who teach the doctrine of Hell understand its implications and realize that it is intended to signify a place of torture of the varying kinds thus described in the words of Claudio in Shakespeare's comedy "Measure for Measure":

Ay, but to die and go we know not where;—  
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;  
This sensible warm motion to become  
A kneaded clod; and the delighted spirit  
To bathe in fiery floods or to reside  
In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;  
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds  
And blown with restless violence round about  
The pendent world.

Later in life when I read the fanatical words of Jonathan Edwards about holding sinners suspended in terror over the flames of Hell, which were often used to frighten the ignorant, the illiterate and the juvenile, I became astounded at the fulsome praise bestowed upon that preacher as a masterly man of God and a philosopher. That I may not be accused of doing injustice to him, these are the words uttered by him in a sermon entitled "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." They read: "The God that holds you over the pit of Hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathesome insect over the fire, is dreadfully provoked; you are ten thousand times more hateful in his eyes than the most hateful, venomous serpent in ours." In these times at any rate, they are scarcely the proper words to be used by a clergyman in the hope that they will lead the hearer into the paths of righteousness. Such pronouncements are a disgrace to a clergyman or any man of intellectual accomplishments.

My antipathy to church and Sunday-school going, and to all the doctrines I was forced to listen to led me to the reading rooms of the Boston Public Library, then and for a long time afterwards in the building on Boylston Street that is now the site of the Colonial Building and the Colonial Theatre. Also I went to its Roxbury Branch about a mile from my home. I made frequent search there for all sorts of controversial and polemic reading on religion. I especially sought the current issues of denominational papers, of which there were then many. I read the Baptist, the Methodist, the Congregational, the Presbyterian, the Episcopal, in fact all the orthodox organs, as well as the heterodox organs of the Unitarians and Universalists, the local representatives of which were the *Christian Register* and the *Christian Leader*. I also read the out-and-out agnostic and anti-Christian papers such as the long departed exponents called *The Index* and *The Investigator*, both published in Boston, and the re-

reading of which nowadays would be especially enlightening because of the liberalization of the doctrines of some of the orthodox faiths.

In addition to these, I read the *Banner of Light*, which was the rather startling title of a spiritualist paper published also in Boston, with its headquarters in a bookstore which contained an abundant supply of material of interest to adherents of that faith. The more liberal papers brought distinct enlightenment to my mind, and opened my eyes with their revelation of ideas and principles that seemed to be mine instinctively, and this with their opposing papers gave me a wide range of opinions both favorable and unfavorable to the doctrines I was compelled to listen to in church. I also sought books on religious problems of every variety, among those that I read with ardor being Winwood Reade's now almost forgotten book entitled "*The Martyrdom of Man*," which is practically a history of the world, and J. M. Robertson's remarkable "*History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*." I now occasionally dip into their pages. It will be noted from all this that I am an irreconcilable materialist.



# 12

## *In Boston Churches*

THERE WAS A LARGE AMOUNT of religious and denominational controversy in those days, but as the nineteenth century passed into the twentieth, liberalism invaded some of the aforetime orthodox pulpits. Yet the fundamentalist point of view is still preached from certain churches, among its bulwarks in Boston being the Tremont Temple Baptist and the Park Street Congregational churches which stand near each other in the downtown centre of the city. Let me diverge from doctrines to architecture for a moment, and look at them as they confront daily many hundreds of thousands who are hurrying through the Boston streets. The first of these, Tremont Temple, has nothing churchly about it, either interior or exterior. It stands as one structure in the middle of a block of buildings, with an entrance in which are displayed announcements of motion pictures, lectures and other forms of entertainment. Inside its walls are lesser halls and offices where are carried on professional and business activities of a hundred varieties. The main Tremont Temple hall is a high-ceiled rectangular auditorium with a platform, a pulpit desk and a large church organ at one end, and two balconies surrounding three of its sides. It is utilized of course for the many church services, and may also be rented for almost any purpose, possibly excluding prize

fight, wrestling matches and rodeos, but including concerts, receptions and even political conventions and rallies.

On the other hand, the Park Street Church, fronting on Tremont Street, is a characteristic New England religious edifice of Bulfinch design, with Boston Common across Park Street on one side and the Old Granary Burying Ground, where stands an ancient monument erected by Benjamin Franklin in memory of his parents, on the other. Since the main floor of the church is up a flight of steps from the sidewalk, its basement just below the street level is occupied by flower and plant shops and other forms of trade, restaurants and miscellaneous commercial enterprises. It is an extremely picturesque building, with its white clock-faced steeple suggesting the atmosphere of a small country village rather than of a big city.

Because of the orthodoxy of the fulminations from its pulpit during many years, the epithet of "Brimstone Corner" is borne by the Park Street Church and its surroundings, and once upon a time a Bostonian wit of some celebrity, bearing in mind the strong breezes that swept around it, made the apt remark that God would have been wise had he tethered a shorn lamb there. At the opposite corner of Park Street stand on the Common several structures utilized for subway stations that have been satirically described as a litter of Public Library pups, so much do they resemble in miniature the large Boston Public Library building in Copley Square.

This church is one of the historic sights of Boston, similar in antique interest to the Old State House in the exact middle of the top of State Street, at its intersection with Washington Street, only a few rods from the scene of the Boston Massacre; the Old South Meeting House at the corner of Washington and Milk streets, where plays were acted by the British soldiers during the Siege of Boston; Faneuil Hall with its bustling ground-floor market; and the Old North Church where were hung the lantern signals to Paul Revere on the

eve of the battle of Concord and Lexington. But we who have lived in Boston for a lifetime pass these places without a thought of their history. It is the newcomer to Boston who takes them to heart and says of them: "How wonderful!"

*The Scriptures and Their Beauty*

TO TURN BACK TO RELIGION, from which I was led astray by this reminiscence of old-time Boston which seems to indicate that after all I am sometimes sensitive to its history: My heterodox ideas continued to seethe in my mind, and at last, when I was about fifteen, I became so assured of myself that I was able to exercise the authority of approaching manhood and throw off a cloak of religion that I was not fitted to wear. I said to myself, and possibly aloud to others, "I will not go to church or Sunday School again," and I have gone very seldom since, and then only of my own volition. My parents were obliged to make the best of what they thought a bad matter, but we continued to love each other just the same. One amusing change of attitude on their part was that after I had become engaged in my work as a professional recorder and critic of the theatre, both my father and my mother occasionally went with me to a play or opera. I had not converted them to my religious faith, or rather to my lack of faith, but at least I had softened and humanized them and had caused them to realize the sincerity of my beliefs.

For thus giving frank expression to my attitude towards religion in general and Christianity in particular, I am likely to be accused of a lack of understanding and want of appreciation of the spiritual elements in man. Yet I have complete

cognizance of them, and I respect those whose opinions differ from mine. I also have no lack of knowledge of the solemnity of the Bible, especially of its King James English version, which seems almost as if it were born of divine inspiration. This I may say in spite of my disbelief in inspiration, divine or otherwise. The literary beauty of some passages in both the Old and the New Testament is undeniable. The Psalms of David are unequalled for their revelation of the inmost feelings of the human soul, whatever may be said of the physical nature of the man to whom their writing is attributed. They are true poetry, if there be such a thing as true poetry. The most quoted Psalm is the twenty-third, and justly so; but there are others, of which the ninetieth is almost as supreme.

These are its lines, and I am presenting them in metrical form, and not as they may be read in the pages of the Bible. Thereby they have the appearance as well as the significance and content of poetry.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place  
In all generations.  
Before the mountains were brought forth,  
Or ever thou hadst formed the earth  
And the world,  
Even from everlasting to everlasting,  
Thou art God.  
Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest,  
Return, ye children of men.  
For a thousand years in thy sight  
Are but as yesterday when it is past,  
And as a watch in the night.  
Thou carryest them away as with a flood;  
They are as a sleep; in the morning  
They are like grass which groweth up.  
In the morning it flourisheth  
And groweth up;  
In the evening it is cut down and withereth,

For we are consumed by thine anger,  
And by thy wrath are we troubled.

O satisfy us early with thy mercy;  
That we may rejoice and be glad  
All our days.

Now these lines and all the rest of the Psalms may not persuade anyone of the truths of Christianity as they are set down in the New Testament. Nor can they be taken literally, for they are contrary to the truths of science. Their spiritual significance gives good reason why the Bible in many languages has become the guiding star of a large portion of mankind. They may be read and studied both as religion and as literature, but to many of us they are literature more than they are religion.

Some years later, I did go, in accordance with my own sweet will, and because I liked to listen to the clear expression of ideas from the pulpit, to the Tremont Temple, which is still a dominant and influential orthodox centre of the work of the Baptists in Boston. Its pastor then was the Rev. Dr. George C. Lorimer, who had none of the obvious characteristics of a denominational preacher. He was an eloquent clerical speaker who gave every Sunday an interesting address, rather than a doctrinal sermon, and who always aroused in me a desire to listen to him again, no matter what his specific theme. His voice was appealing, no matter how long he talked. I knew he would invariably have something worth while to tell me and others in his congregation, or perhaps I should describe it as his audience. I may have been prejudiced in his favor by the fact that there was nothing notably religious about the auditorium of Tremont Temple, and also by my knowledge that in his younger days he had been an actor.

Dr. Lorimer was of Scottish birth and ancestry, the stepson of a theatrical manager named Josephs, and he was on the

stage for some years, coming to this country at the age of seventeen, and acting in various cities. At last he abandoned the theatre for the pulpit, and rose to become an influential and widely known exponent not merely of the Baptist faith but of the Christian church. He was sixty-six at the time of his death in Aix-les-Bains, whither he had gone for his health. He was the father of George Horace Lorimer, author of "Letters from a Self-Made Merchant to His Son," who was for almost forty years editor of the Saturday Evening Post.

This brings to mind that, years before Dr. Lorimer's time, another actor had likewise gone from the theatre to the church, although later in his life. This was James Sheridan Knowles, who was better known as a dramatist than as an actor. He was the author of several popular dramas, including "Virginius," "The Love Chase," and "The Hunchback," without the acting of which no theatrical season either in Great Britain or in the United States was considered complete for many years. This era of my church-going was coincident with the first epoch of my theatre-going, before and during my college days.

# 14

## *As an Office Boy*

ALL THIS IS MERELY a casual view of myself, just to reveal my unchanging feelings as the years went by. During this time I managed to pick up a few dollars now and then by means of odds and ends of work, the most important being a short period of about a year in the Cambridge Public Library, which in the early eighties occupied restricted quarters on the second floor of a building in the midst of a business block that stood on Main Street within a stone's throw of Central Square. If I remember aright, I worked there on the afternoons and evenings of three days a week, out of my school hours, my duties being to take the books asked for by the applicants to the delivery desk. It was easy and congenial work, and for it I received the munificent sum of fifty cents a day.

As I survey in my mind's eye that library scene of more than fifty years ago, it rests in memory not upon the rows of books on the shelves, but instead upon the spaces there made vacant by the continuous demand of grown-up readers for the fiction of Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, Mary Jane Holmes, and other popular writers of that hour, and also of the youthful devotees of such authors for the young as Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, Harry Castlemon and their companions who were then at the height of their reputation. There were many hours from day to day when all those shelves were absolutely



empty. Quite logically, but unintentionally, I was in a bookish atmosphere from my early teens.

As I grew up, and felt my way along towards manhood, I continued to find an audience for my writing, small though it was. Among much else, I contributed play reviews to suburban and minor Boston papers. After going to a grammar school, from which I was graduated, I sought an advanced education at the Cambridge High School for a year, from which I was not graduated because I left it to search for an opportunity to earn my living. My father and mother gave me a home, and with the aid of a family friend I found employment, first as a combination office boy, typist and general help for a Boston agent of a New York lithographic printing firm who was also the American representative of an English steel manufacturing and exporting house. Its headquarters were at Rotherham, not far from Sheffield, that famous and ancient town in the West Riding of Yorkshire mentioned by Scott in the very first paragraph of "Ivanhoe."

Years and years afterwards I was dining at the house of friends where a young Englishman was also present. When I happened to mention Rotherham, he exclaimed, "Why I was born there," one of those odd coincidences that we sometimes encounter by happy fate. The name of this first employer of mine was C. W. Power, but apparently he was ashamed that the letter C stood for Cornelius, for when more than one acquaintance called him Charlie, he did not set them aright. This was in 1885, and his office was in the rear of the third floor of the Transcript Building, in which structure I was destined soon to find a working home over a period, with brief intermissions, of no less than fifty years.

Since I received only \$3.00 a week from him (green office boys now get at least five times that) I looked about me for some means to increase that meagre salary; and buying a typewriter on the instalment plan, I earned some extra money by copying papers and documents, mainly architects' specifi-

cations, which I obtained through my father's aid. I went into it in business-like fashion and had so good a supply of cards printed that I still have many left. Why have I kept them, I do not know, except to sustain my remembrance of those prentice days. These are the words on them: "Edwin F. Edgett, Type-Writer Copyist. All kinds of copying done with neatness and dispatch. Rates—6 cents per 100 words; duplicate copies half price. Room 8, Transcript Building, 328 Washington Street, Boston, Mass." So it will be seen that the Transcript and I were associated from my earliest days.

After less than a year I left this employer to work as a combination office boy and clerk for a solicitor of patents named P. E. Teschemacher, and learned quite a little about that unusual profession which acts as an intermediary between the inventor and the United States Patent Office in Washington. When an applicant for a patent came in we would first make a careful search through the classified index published by the government, for which of course a fee was charged by Mr. Teschemacher, and if anything similar was discovered we would advise the applicant that it would be useless to pursue the matter further. Otherwise, if he told us to go ahead, we would prepare the papers for him, send them on to Washington and await the issue. The work of this profession is sometimes misunderstood. My employer was not a patent attorney, who tries patent cases in the courts, but merely a solicitor whose work ends with the granting or refusal of the patents.

This work was not uncongenial, but again, after less than a year at it, I transferred my labors and interests, thereby gaining a slight increase in salary, to a third room on the third floor of the Transcript Building. This time I was with an advertising agency under the control of Henry B. Humphrey, who not long ago was honored with a dinner in commemoration of his fiftieth anniversary as its head. I should have attended it, especially as I received an invitation from Mr. Humphrey to sit at the head table as his guest; but as

always my chronic indisposition to attend such gatherings got the better of me, and I failed to do my duty. I have refused to be present at other such occasions, and I fear I shall never be able to overcome this negligent habit.

During all these changes, it will be noted, I had moved only a few feet, the latest to Mr. Humphrey's advertising agency being to a suite of two rooms in the Transcript Building, with their windows looking across Milk Street out over the sloping roof of the historic Old South Meeting House. These frequent removals were not due to a restless spirit, but always along the path of advancement in my more or less successful attempts to rise in the world and better myself financially. My second salary, as I remember, was \$5.00 a week, and during my three years in the advertising business I received successively \$7.00, \$9.00 and \$10.00 weekly.

This entire period of office work continued about five years, the major part of the time in advertising, the especial attraction of this, aside from the slowly increasing salary, being that it brought me into the atmosphere of newspapers, even though I had nothing to do with their editing or writing. I was so fond of newspapers and everything connected with them that at one time I began a collection of them, but soon gave it up when I discovered that a storage warehouse would be required eventually to accommodate them. By working in an advertising agency, which receives daily a large number of newspapers, it was easy for me to acquire one copy of different papers from all over the country. But I was still far from my goal, a position on a newspaper. For five years I eyed with envy the Transcript employees as they were going to and fro, up and down stairs (for there was no elevator in the building) listening to the sound of the telegraph instruments on the floor above me, and to the roar of the presses in the basement.

*At Last an A. B.*

I HAD ALWAYS HAD THE THOUGHT of college in my mind, but not until some moment I cannot recall did it seem more than a vain hope. How could I go to college with practically no savings, with no capital, and no adequate preparation with which to face the ordeal of the entrance examinations? I should be almost incomeless for four years, and with no definite prospect of increasing my earning powers when at last I had achieved the minor degree of A. B. My parents would give me a home, but they were unable to do more, except to offer me the best advice and encouragement within their power. It would be a sacrifice for them to support me for a long four years, but they did it. I did my best to repay them in the years after my graduation.

Harvard was my aim. I thought of no other college, chiefly because I lived not far from Harvard. My first step was to enter the Boston Evening High School, and to attend some of its classes while I was working daily in the advertising business, which fortunately I liked. I hoped to prepare myself for the entrance examinations in a year, but I was soon told by a friend who had just become a member of the Harvard freshman class that I might enter at once as a special student. That plan had never occurred to me, and of course I grasped it. This intimate friend, James Walter Smith, dead now some

ten years, will appear again in these pages, and I want to say now that he was my closest associate from the moment we met in the eighties. Both of us were then less than twenty, and he became a part of my life and I a part of his for almost half a century. We had been ardent playgoers since the beginning of our intimacy. He was attacked vigorously by the journalistic bee, and so was I. He went to London shortly after his graduation from Harvard in 1894 to enter and pursue his profession there, and I followed him at his invitation about five years later, but remained only a year, he staying on successfully until after the outbreak of the World War. But all this, in the words of a great journalist who became a great author, is another story, to be continued in these pages a little later.

My attempt to become a special student at Harvard met with success, and, quite surprised at and rejoicing in my good luck, I was enrolled in October, 1890, about a month after the college had opened its new year. I left my advertising employment at once, although I later returned to it during two summer vacations. Soon I was on my way up a long and steep climb through four Harvard years. What I had to do was to raise myself from the role of special student to the rank of undergraduate by selecting a list of six courses, two more than the required number, each college year. If I received the high mark of A or B in them, I should pass in each course for the year, and also remove my condition in each subject. The scheme of the special student system was that the ambitious young man was conditioned in every study required for entrance, and to become an undergraduate he must make a definite record in each. I did what I set out to do, eventually becoming a member of the class of 1894, being graduated in that year at the age of twenty-seven. In other words, I was four years older than the average student. Neither then nor since have I regretted that I was over the normal age, feeling that my superior years had given me a clearer outlook and a

firmer grasp upon my studies and upon the world outside than I should have had in entering college in my teens.

There is something else to tell about my attainment of this A. B. degree. I had not been able to pass off all my conditions. To gain my diploma I was still faced by the fateful problems of algebra and geometry. It seemed for a time that they had been placed there deliberately to block my path. I was in good company, for mathematics has been an obstacle to many others. As the end of my fourth year approached, I thought I was beaten. I had not taken the entrance examinations in mathematics, and I had entered no course in any branch of that science, but I could attempt them belatedly. By what appears to be a miracle, I passed the test in algebra: since I answered only two out of the five questions on the paper, and made merely a feeble attempt at a third, I have never understood how I did it. Perhaps there was an angel watching over me who inspired sympathy and leniency in whoever read and marked my answers. His task was certainly slight. Then I had also the examination in plane geometry to undergo; but I could not pass it, be it plane or otherwise, for the simple reason that I knew literally nothing about a subject that is an open book to any mathematician. My previous efforts as a student of that science had all been failures.

In the midst of my distress, I sought the dean, then the always helpful and lovable Professor Le Baron Russell Briggs, afterwards president of Radcliffe College, and was told by him that my only chance was to petition the faculty for my degree without removing my geometry condition, and, what was worse, I should not know if it were granted until Commencement Day. He added encouragingly that, since my record otherwise was good, the chances were in my favor. I presented the petition, my plea was granted and I became a Bachelor of Arts of Harvard College. How much good it has done me, I have never been able to learn, except that I have

the right to claim to be a Harvard alumnus, and to write the letters A. B. after my name, which I never do.

At any rate, to counterbalance my degradation in mathematics, I received at my graduation what is known as Honorable Mention in English Literature and in English Composition, which meant that I had been given the mark of either A or B in a specified number of courses in those subjects. I had specialized in them during all my four years, and it is therefore not astonishing that I did well in them.

I was helped a great deal while I was at Harvard by the fact that my friend Walter Smith roomed in Weld Hall, one of the dormitories in the yard. My home was in West Somerville, nearly two miles away, just over the line from North Cambridge. I walked back and forth daily, making my headquarters in Walter's room, being granted as many privileges as though I belonged there and helped his father pay the rent. There I met several of his friends who became my friends, primarily Billy Boos, his roommate, whose specialty was chemistry. He is of German ancestry, and after graduating from Harvard, he received the degree of Ph. D. from the University of Heidelberg and of M. D. from the Harvard Medical School. Other important scientific services followed at the University of Strassburg and elsewhere, and he became a practicing physician in Boston and a specialist in toxicology, being often summoned as an expert of last resort in many court trials where poison has been a formidable factor. I have called him by his youthful nickname, but he is known to the world as Dr. William Frederick Boos. In a recent book entitled "The Poison Trail," in which he tells "the story of man's struggle against his most insidious enemy," he throws much light on that phase of his profession. Another member of the class of 1894, equally eminent in the same work, was Dr. George Burgess Magrath, and still another is the class secretary, Edward Kennard Rand, now and for many years a Harvard professor of Latin. The mention of his name brings

vividly to mind that one of my greatest unfulfilled ambitions is scholarship in the classics, and that one of my most emphatic regrets is that among the educational tendencies of the hour are neglect of and opposition to the study and teaching of the languages and literatures of ancient Greece and Rome. They are of far greater intellectual value than is a knowledge of mathematics. The class of 1894 is quite exceptional for having a large number of its members still with us.



*Mathematics a Stumbling Block*

ONE ADVANTAGE TO THE STUDENT of English composition was that he had no examinations to pass, for he was marked on the themes and essays he handed in to the teacher at stated intervals. In one class, English 12, there were daily themes to write, each of only one page. One teacher, I do not remember who, remarked to his class in history, or whatever it was, that he had little to say in favor of examinations in general as tests of a student's knowledge, but that he could not see what to substitute for them, and that they were therefore perhaps a necessary evil. It certainly did add to my peace of mind, when I was taking a course in English composition, to anticipate that there would be no three hours of discomfort in the examination room twice a year, the finals usually by some sad chance taking place on a superheated June morning. On the other hand, the reading and marking of examination papers is a terrific grind for a professor to be subjected to at any time.

I am by no means alone in my mathematical deficiencies. Ever since the day of the immortal Euclid, there have been many men whose minds have not run in his channels, and who know scarcely the difference between a radius and a diameter, who know nothing about logarithms and the calculus, and who are ignorant of what the Greek letter Pi stands

for in geometry. From my earliest days I have been unable to comprehend even the elements of mathematics. As a distinguished Harvard professor whose reputation still lives inside and out of the university once said to the members of a large class in English composition: "I never could understand what the blamed stuff is all about." Perhaps he used a stronger word than "blamed," but whatever it was we will let it go at that.

A more famous man than this professor had written years before from the English Cambridge to his mother at home: "I can scarcely bear to write on mathematics and mathematicians. Oh for words to express my abomination of that science, if a name sacred to the useful and embellishing arts may be applied to the perception and recollection of certain numbers and figures. Oh that I had to learn astrology, or demonology, or school divinity; oh that I were to pore over Thomas Aquinas, and to adjust the relation of Entity with the two Predicaments, and that I were exempted from this miserable study. Discipline of the mind! Say rather starvation, confinement, torture, annihilation! But it must be. I feel myself becoming a personification of algebra, a living trigonometrical canon, a walking table of logarithms!"

This famous opponent of mathematics was Macaulay. For myself, it may have been that my troubles in mathematics were due partly to the methods of teaching fifty years ago. Possibly they have changed for the better. I hope so. At any rate, it is obvious to me now that they were totally inadequate. They certainly ought to be altered, if they have undergone no change. I feel sure after all these many years that my shortcomings were not wholly my own fault, since little if anything was done in school by way of sympathetic explanation to make my pathway easy. I felt then and I feel now that no effort was made to stimulate what little mathematical mind I possessed, or whatever mild interest I might have been able to arouse in figures, angles and all the other formulas of

algebra and geometry, not to mention trigonometry and quadratics. Amid what happened in the schoolroom it was never explained to me, and I could never understand why we were forced to figure with letters. I know that  $x$  represents an unknown quantity, but why does it, and what do I care about unknown quantities when even known quantities are a mystery to me?  $x$ ,  $y$  and  $z$  seemed to be nothing more than letters of the alphabet. Why should they usurp the place of figures?

It may seem strange to my readers, as it also seems strange to me, that, in spite of all this antipathy to mathematics, I read everything about astronomy that came before my eyes, and have continued to do so. Some of the books on that science are of course utterly beyond me, but if they do not go too far, if they are not filled with mathematical calculations, my mind is able to grasp some of their intricacies. The ether which fills the universe and submerges the stars, the moon and the satellites and planets and comets, arouses in me a supreme exaltation of spirit and body. I can see all these heavenly bodies, even if I do not know how to calculate and prophesy their movements. Astronomy fills my imagination with its mysterious inhabitants of space. Its elements are easy to grasp, and I need go no further than them. At least I know how many degrees there are in a circle, what it means when we read about light-years, how far it is from the earth to the Pole Star, what are the Ptolemaic and Copernican systems, what Galileo proved when he dropped two bodies of unequal weight from the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and many of the other aspects and wonders of the universe.

*Harvard Hardships*

AS I LOOK BACK UPON THEM, even in my most optimistic moods, my days at Harvard were a continuous series of hardships. My worst handicap was lack of money. I suffered from that both of itself, and because in the lecture halls and on the college grounds I met multitudes of youths who gave no thought to money for the good reason that they had plenty of it. Too many of them were supercilious in their attitude towards their fellows with little means. Some of these rich ones were supported in such affluence by their parents that they were able to live in suites with gold desk-fittings and the attentions of a valet. I heard of one student who bought a piano with his scholarship money. I shall never forget the morning when I passed on a college path a student I had been tutoring the previous evening and received no recognition from him. It may have been that he was absent-minded! Perhaps?

I came across the valeted student in my senior year when I was trying to earn a little by helping him pass an examination in English. Doubtless his chief, if not his only, interest in Harvard was clubs and sports. More than one man I tutored failed to pay his bill, perhaps through thoughtlessness, and perhaps through deliberate intent. Both were unpardonable. It was difficult to concentrate upon my studies when

I was worrying about where my next dollar was coming from. Once in a while I received a check for writing for a Boston newspaper, always on my favorite subject of the theatre; but, whether or not it was forthcoming, I was glad to have what I wrote accepted for the sake of the experience and the introductions it brought me. This stood me in good stead. But for it I never should have gained my start in journalism after my graduation.

I survived these ordeals of penury, and was graduated with all my debts paid, owing no money to anybody, except the few dollars I was able to repay quickly to those who had put their trust in me. Towards the end of my Harvard time I was fortunate enough to earn small amounts in this tutoring of my backward fellow students in English composition and literature, the only subjects I was qualified to teach, if I had any claim whatever to be a teacher. Looking from the past towards the present, I am certain that indigent students of today must have a much harder time than I had. The term bill then, payable in thirds, was \$150 a year; now it is \$400, making it practically impossible for a young man without parental help, without savings or income, to go to Harvard. And in addition the living expenses are now much higher. And these are the type of young men who most need and want a college education. But such is the way of the world. I wonder, as I dwell on the trials of the past, if it is worth more to go to Harvard in these twentieth century forties than it was in the nineteenth century nineties.

One of the most disconcerting aspects of a college education, at any time, is the extensive bill of fare offered the student with an appetite for knowledge by contrast with the little time he has for study and classwork in the fleeting period of four years. Whoever has turned the pages of the Harvard catalogue with its curriculum covering all branches of literature, languages, the sciences, history and biography, and all the rest, must be amazed by the vast number of

courses offered every year. They cause him to see readily how difficult and unending is the road to knowledge, and at the same time how circumscribed is our ability to traverse it. In this catalogue, for instance, as we turn the pages containing the lists of courses offered by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to students of the college alone, not including the schools of law, medicine, business and all the professions, we look along an astounding vista of potential education.

These Harvard courses, each listed with its brief description in a few lines, with the name of its instructor, and its day and hour of meeting, fill no fewer than 158 pages of the more than one thousand pages of a recent annual catalogue. The courses in all departments, beginning with the Semitic languages and literature, and ending with sociology, total 1006. Their range extends from such easily understandable themes as instruction in English composition especially for freshmen to courses bearing the formidable titles of "Linear Differential Equations of the Second Order" and "Political and Social History of the Mohammedans to the Conquest of Selim I." To look at these lists causes the prospective student almost to despair of learning anything, especially when he notes that the requirements for a degree are the passing of examinations in only sixteen courses annually, and that the limit of courses in one year is twenty. The best decision to make in the face of all this is to do one's best to storm the breastworks of knowledge as we start on our campaign of education.

# 18

## *Before the Footlights*

CERTAIN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES help to diversify the life of a college student. Since Cambridge is at the very doors of Boston, it is customary for undergraduates, and graduate students as well, to attend the theatres across the Charles River. That is well known, but it is not so well known that some of them have a passion for appearing on the other side of the footlights in the humble capacity of supernumeraries—or “supers,” as they are called for short. Whenever a star actor or actress came to a Boston theatre in a play where extra members of the company were needed to complete the cast of participants in a mob or otherwise, they would assemble at the stage door in the hope of being taken on, even if for only one performance. The supply was always greater than the demand, and often the alley leading to a stage entrance was filled with dozens of students clamoring for admittance and the possibility of seeing a famous actor at close range. A few were allowed to enter, and then the door was closed in the faces of the rejected, who might be accepted if they returned the next day.

I was not immune from the craze for “suping,” and one afternoon I found myself, with other enthusiasts, in the subterranean dressing rooms of the Tremont Theatre preparing to go on in support of Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. My

part was a verger, a minor church official, in "Much Ado About Nothing," and in the evening I returned and was admitted again to appear as a Paris gamin in "The Lyons Mail," that glorious old melodrama in which Irving gave a marvellous impersonation of the dual characters of Dubosc and Lesurques, the first a murderer and the other a hapless honest man who resembled him so strikingly that he was arrested, tried and convicted and guillotined for a crime with which he had no connection. Later I saw Irving act in this play at his own Lyceum Theatre in London, and still later I also saw his son, H. B. Irving, duplicate the success of his father on the stage of the Colonial Theatre in Boston. As a matter of fact, "The Lyons Mail" is an "actor-proof" play, which means that its realistic-romantic acting is not a difficult task for any accomplished actor.

Since we "supers" were subordinates, we were not allowed to loiter in the wings, lest we interfere with the members of the company on their exits and entrances. But I managed to obtain a few glimpses of the progress of the play and its leading personages, and I do remember vividly seeing Irving, who was very near-sighted, handing his glasses to his dresser whenever he went on the stage, and receiving them back the moment he came off. Strangely enough, however, I do not remember Miss Terry as Beatrice. She had no part in "The Lyons Mail."

Although I have spent many hours back-stage at rehearsals and performances—my readers will learn why in the course of this story—these were my only appearances in public, if they can so be called, since I was simply one of many shrouded in the dense obscurity of a mob. Not in all these years to come did I even once attempt to act in the smallest capacity, although I have no doubt that my request would have been granted had I been unwise enough to make it. I had sufficient sense, which many have not, to reject even the slightest ambition in that direction, for I knew well that I



never could become an actor. I saw too many bad actors to want to follow in their feeble footsteps.

My early ventures into casual writing were so many and varied that almost all evade my memory. Only recently, after I had begun these pages, I came across a bundle of type-written manuscripts on various themes that had apparently been rejected and returned one by one, and then cast by me into the oblivion of a cabinet drawer. About the same time, as I was looking over a mass of discarded magazines, I opened their pages to articles bearing my name as author that I recalled, but to my surprise discovered two efforts at translation that had apparently pleased an editor. One of these stories, entitled "The Siege of Berlin," a translation from the French of Alphonse Daudet's short story of an imaginary incident during the Siege of Paris, was prefaced by this brief editorial explanation: "The following touching story of the Franco-Prussian War is from the powerful pen of Alphonse Daudet, and was translated for the Boston Transcript." That was true, but the editor of this magazine did not take the trouble to add that I was its translator, that it had been sent by me to the Transcript, accepted and printed, and that I was paid a small sum for my work. This happened before I was connected with the Transcript.

The second of these discoveries of myself as a translator was a story printed in a later issue of the same magazine, which bore the name of Romance. It was preceded by these words in small type: "This simple but touching little sketch has been translated for Romance by Edwin Francis Edgett from the German of Marc Boyen." Its title was "My First Patient," and I looked at it with amazement. I have not the slightest recollection of having read the story, and least of all of translating it. I have only a meagre knowledge of the German language, sufficient perhaps to discover the meaning of a simple sentence, and I fail to see how I could have had the assurance to put the story into English; it was good

English, if I do say so, but of course I do not know the value of it as a translation. It reads smoothly, and it is possible that I have forgotten more of the German language and literature than I am aware of at this late day. There it is, however, and I suppose that the editor of *Romance* was right in crediting it to me. But the sight of it remains a surprise and a mystery.

# 19

## *Some Harvard Professors*

THIS IS CERTAINLY A FITTING PLACE to give the praise they deserve to a group of members of the Harvard faculty and its teaching staff who proffered me and others their intellectual aid and encouragement. In those days of the early nineties there were eminent and influential men whose fame extended and still extends beyond the bounds of the university. Among them were Francis James Child, master of ballad lore who had begun his work as a teacher of science and mathematics, but who later became a specialist in English; George Lyman Kittredge, an exceptional example of the scholar who is also an expert and inspiring teacher; Adams Sherman Hill, widely known as the author of a text-book on rhetoric; Barrett Wendell, man of the world as he was also of the lecture room, and of a most ingratiating individuality; Le Baron Russell Briggs, youthful in appearance, delightful in the classroom, and sympathetic as dean; George Pierce Baker, in the first years of his enthusiasm and unaware of what the future held in store for him as a teacher of the drama and leader of the now bygone Workshop 47. Of these only Professor Kittredge is living, with the addition of Emeritus to his title. And then too there were William Lyon Phelps, for only a year a teacher at Harvard, and soon to begin his long career at Yale as teacher, lecturer and man

of a million friendships; and Charles Townsend Copeland, whose work and personality are above all praise, and whom I knew and know best of all.

All these men were teachers in the English department, but those were also the great days of the philosophy department. Among its leaders were George Herbert Palmer, William James, Josiah Royce, George Santayana and Hugo Münsterberg. There is nothing I can say to add to their eminence or their enduring fame. Their world-wide reputations live after them. But I must say a few words as to how they impressed me during the brief intervals when I sat under them in the midst of my regular studies of English. Professor Palmer was a notable lecturer and teacher, and the substance of his life and work may be found in his books. He became the husband of Alice Freeman when she was president of Wellesley College, and his account of her life, her personality as woman and educator, which he wrote subsequent to her death in 1902, after they had been together fifteen years, belongs in the highest rank of biographical literature. It is especially significant for its revelation of the professional achievements and the intellectual spirit of the kindred souls of a man and a woman. When he sat in his chair lecturing on logic, Professor Palmer talked to us on a technical subject so clearly that he made it as living as if he were speaking of the actualities of human existence.

In his studies, writings and teachings, Professor James emphasized the technical aspects of philosophy, his specialty being psychology, although his best known book, "The Varieties of Religious Experience," is his most lasting piece of literary work. He was a brother of Henry James, the novelist, and they were the sons of an earlier Henry James, who was famous as an apostle of the doctrines of Swedenborg, and who sat in the seats of the spiritually minded mighty. Of the two sons, some one remarked that the philosopher wrote like a novelist, and the novelist like a philosopher. There is no

question that there is more clarity in the philosophy of William James than in the fiction of Henry James.

The third of this quintet, Josiah Royce, between whom and William James there were many contentious arguments on the theory of pragmatism, had come to Harvard from the University of California, from Johns Hopkins and from German universities. If I am asked what is meant by that mysterious word "pragmatism," I may simplify the definition given by Noah Webster or one of his successors in his immortal dictionary by telling you that a pragmatist, William James for instance, believed that the truth must be tested by practical experience, and that his rival held the opposite opinion. Professor Royce had attempted a work of fiction in his younger days, but I think that thereafter he must have given up forever the idea of continuing with the novel, for all his later books deal exclusively with such theories of philosophic thought as "The Conception of Immortality" and "The World and the Individual."

In appearance Professor Royce was not at all the philosopher, whatever may be our conception of the role, for his figure was squatty, and in his facial expression and the hand he wrote he never seemed to have risen to maturity. But there was nothing immature about his mind, and many a student prospered by his wisdom and counsel. The fourth, and the only one of these philosophers I never met, is now living somewhere in Europe. George Santayana was a conspicuous Harvard professor back in the eighties, and as his name signifies he is of Spanish descent. With "The Last Puritan" he reversed the procedure of Josiah Royce, and wrote a novel as he was nearing old age, instead of at the beginning of his professional life. Hugo Münsterberg was a later importation from Germany, and suffered under the stigma of his country's action in the World War.

No remarks about Harvard teachers in those days would be complete without the inclusion of Charles Eliot Norton, who

was a foremost member of the faculty and a distinguished man of letters. He was an author, a thinker, a teacher, a lecturer, and notably a friend and associate of leaders in the literary world, among them Emerson, Ruskin and Carlyle. He had begun to go upward on the ladder of business, but soon abandoned it for the field of intellect and education. He was a son of the eminent theologian, Andrews Norton, and a cousin of Charles William Eliot. His principal duties as a Harvard professor were to preside over classes in the history of the fine arts, gathering at his lectures many students who were laboring under the delusion that they were what is known as "snap courses," i.e., easy in the examinations, but who when the fatal day came found out to their sorrow that they had been mistaken. It was Professor Norton's habit to talk in his lectures about everything under the sun outside the range of the arts, from politics and science to cakes and ale and the musical glasses.

# 20

## *Two Young Teachers*

IT WAS MY GOOD FORTUNE to know William Lyon Phelps in my sophomore year, the only year in which he taught at Harvard, and this was at the outset of his long career as a teacher of world-wide reputation. He came to Harvard soon after having earned his A.B. from Yale, and later he received simultaneously an A.M. from Harvard and a Ph.D. from Yale. Through the college year 1891-1892 he was on the Harvard teaching staff as an instructor in the English department, and although he was but two years older than I, the disparity in our ages seemed much greater then than it seems now.

Returning directly to Yale from Harvard, he rose rapidly in the faculty, eventually becoming Lampson Professor of English Literature, which chair he still holds after having in 1933 joined the ranks of the Emeriti. Age limitations made imperative the change into semi-retirement, although to him now belongs the added exceptional honor of the title of Public Orator. His help to me during his one year at Harvard was given while he was one of the instructors in the required sophomore course in composition known as English B. Luckily for me, his section of the class comprised those sophomores whose names began with the first letters of the alphabet. In companionship with my classmate Lindsay Todd

Damon, for many years a professor in the English department at Brown University, he gave me the highest mark of A for my work in his course.

Ever since then for nearly fifty years Professor Phelps and I have kept up a desultory correspondence at the rate of about one letter a year; but we have never met again, I am sorry to say. It must be my fault, for he has occasionally come to Boston on a lecture tour. Our brief letters do something to fill the gap. This is a portion of one written from New Haven in 1916:

. . . I not only have remembered always giving you an "A" in that course, but I have always taken pride in the fact that I had sense enough to do it. Only the middle of last week I was talking with a Boston man and I said that when you were an undergraduate I had given you an "A" in English and it had given me pleasure every time I had thought of it. I think you are doing some of the best work of your kind in America today.

I hope I shall not be accused of having a too highly developed bump of egotism by reproducing this letter.

We were judged in that course by the instructor on the quality of the themes we wrote, and perhaps one of the reasons why he liked mine was that they dealt mainly with topics and problems of literature and the drama. Looking over the original copies of these themes recently, I discovered that one was an appreciative review of Mrs. Humphry Ward's then new novel, "The History of David Grieve." I have this manuscript before me as I am writing these words, and on its back is this comment (signed "W. L. P."): "This is an excellent theme; perhaps the best you have written in this course; although all of your work the second half year has been much better than it was before. You have overcome entirely your tendency to slop over: you now have a dignified, luminous style. Your paragraphs are occasionally incoherent."

This theme is dated April 19, 1892, over forty-eight years



ago! Its subject was an author upon whom Professor Phelps later voiced many words of censure. Perhaps he judged it so favorably because of its evident sincerity; perhaps with the increasing volume of her work, he grew to dislike her, which is understandable. I do not want to be so self-satisfied as to think he was wise in his judgment of me, but I do know that he was wise in his counsel, that he was a born educator and not a pedagogue. Harvard should be proud of his connection with her, and regretful that he left so soon for the woods that were not fresh and the pastures that were not new to him at Yale.

The repute of Professor Phelps is not merely as a Yale teacher, but also as an American lecturer and author. I do not hesitate to perpetrate a commonplace when I say that Harvard's loss was Yale's gain, and also the gain of the entire American public. Now at last we are fortunate in being able to read his own story as he tells it in his fascinating "Autobiography with Letters," which I do not hesitate to describe as one of the most diversified and entertaining books of any kind I have ever read. In the pages in which he surveys the happenings of his youth he mentions his miraculous escape from death in a railroad accident, exclaiming: "What a great deal I would have missed!" Indeed, he would, and the world would have missed it too.

Two more letters from Professor Phelps seem apropos at this moment. The first reached me in the midst of the whirlwind of popularity of A. S. M. Hutchinson's novel:

SEVEN GABLES, HURON CITY, MICHIGAN

8 Sept. 1921

My dear Edgett—

I'm very glad we agree (as we so often do) on "If Winter Comes." What a fine novel it is! I look to him (Hutchinson) as a coming force and a bringer of happiness.

Ever Yours

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

The other letter refers to my taking him to task in friendly fashion for omitting one important detail in his professional life from his biographical sketch in "Who's Who in America":

YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN  
22 June 1923

Dear Edgett—

I am deeply grateful for the affectionate notice of my book, for I value highly both your friendship and your good opinion. I am more pleased than I can say.

I shall send to every future Who's Who both English and American—"1891-2 Instructor at Harvard." I am proud of it, and don't know why it has been omitted. P.S. I see I did put it in the English edition. It is there!

Yours,  
W. L. P.

I should like to include more of his letters, but there is a limit to all good things.

Also in my sophomore year there was another young and inspiring instructor who remains in my memory—Lewis Edwards Gates. He too read some of my English B themes, and was of help to me through his advice and kind words of measured praise. I never saw or heard from him after that year. I cannot say that I really knew him, for he was shy and of secluded habits, moods that were mine also. But I do remember that he told some of the members of his class in English composition that he would be glad to see and talk with anyone who cared to knock at his door at a certain hour he held reserved for them. The usual happened with me, for I was foolishly afraid of intruding, and missed my opportunity. I have all my life regretted my failure to know him better in the course of his short life in which he strove to give so much aid to his fellow students, for he himself was a student as well as a teacher. He has been dead many years.

There is little doubt that Mr. Gates started many a young

ambitious writer along the broad highway to success. One definite instance of this came to me only the other day when I picked up a copy of Frank Norris's novel, "McTeague," for the purpose of re-reading it, and discovered, what I had doubtless known but forgotten, that it was dedicated to "L. E. Gates of Harvard University." That novel had been published in 1899, and this dedication is significant, for in the briefest possible words it is its author's tribute to the man who taught Frank Norris much in his struggle to become a novelist.

Frank Norris had been studying at the University of California, but because of the handicap of mathematics he left and came east to Harvard. He elected a special course in English composition and made rapid progress during 1895-1896. He was then only twenty-four. Writing, editing, travel, campaigns as a war correspondent in South Africa during the Jameson Raid, and in Cuba during the Spanish War were followed by other literary work until his life was suddenly cut short at the very time when he was about to complete his trilogy of the "Epic of the Wheat." He had begun the writing of "McTeague" before he went to Harvard, but it was not published until 1899. I read it first when I was living in London forty years ago; I re-read it the other day, and while it somewhat too slavishly follows the Zola model in its super-realism, and will perhaps repel many readers by its portrayal of one of the most brutal human beings ever created by a novelist, it is nevertheless a remarkable achievement for so young a writer. It is a landmark in the progress of American fiction, and it is fitting that the name of Lewis E. Gates should be associated with it.

I must close this chapter with a reflection upon the passing of time as these memories of the last decade of the nineteenth century throng my mind. Here am I, with the survivors of that era rapidly growing fewer, myself still content in the hope of more years to come. As I go to and fro between

Arlington and Boston by street car to take the subway train at Harvard Square for Park Street, my thoughts inevitably turn backwards through the fifty years that have elapsed since I was walking along Massachusetts Avenue daily on my way between the college and my home in West Somerville. It was a journey of nearly two miles, and I walked it twelve times a week for four years. The scene has changed and I have changed with it, but strangely I do not feel that I am half a century older. The passage of time is clearly revealed to my eyes, for along the street where stood estates and houses of considerable size are the now omnipresent apartment houses in which live hundreds instead of the aforetime dozens. Stores have also sprung up here and there, large electric trolley cars have taken the place of the small ones, and we are in what is a new world, almost another world, a modern world of the mid-twentieth century. A better world? Yes, perhaps!

# 21

## *Early Days with Copey*

IT WAS IN THE TIME BEFORE those changes had begun that Charles Townsend Copeland came to Harvard. He made that short trip across the Charles River preparatory to a fifty years' residence I am sure he did not anticipate. Ten years had gone by since he had left the college with his degree of A.B. Before his entrance into the teaching world he had served a short term in the literary editor's chair of the Boston Post, a high-class daily newspaper then known as the organ of the "kid-glove Democrats." It was not long after his arrival that he began to be recognized as an exceptional force in the midst of the group of distinguished teachers that comprised the department of English at Harvard. He was then just past thirty, and he rose by successive stages to become the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory. He appealed to me as a young man, quiet in manner, placid in temperament, who would make his way steadily in his new profession. He immediately assembled a small array of students, of whom I was one.

From the first there was nothing academic about him, no pose of the beginner who was eager to become a professor. He talked rather than taught, referring pleasantly to his brief connection with journalism, mentioning the delights of receiving all the new books for review, but saying nothing

about the drawbacks that made his duties exacting. I did not foresee that not long afterwards I myself was to join that profession. He made it apparent that he had come to Harvard to study as well as to teach. This was the modest beginning of his long service there, and during all those years he and I have maintained a close acquaintance and friendship. His unofficial summons to his classrooms was answered by a select few who were in earnest, glad that a new and appealing personality had arrived.

In the most informal manner Copeland met his students. Sometimes it was a gathering of an afternoon in a small out-of-the-way room in an upper story of Sever Hall, where in listening to his reading and interpretation of Shakspeare and other poets and prose writers, a prophet, had one been present, might have foretold the days when the largest hall in Cambridge, Boston, or anywhere, would be far too small to hold his listeners. At other times, at the early hour of nine three mornings a week, he invited all who would to meet him in Sever 11 and there read to him so that he might lead them aright.

Never did that large amphitheatre look more capacious than at those nine o'clock sessions, with the small figure of Copeland behind the desk at the bottom of the stepped-up rows of seats, while scattered above were only a dozen or so young men, few of whom could read acceptably, but all in search of the enlightenment they could not obtain elsewhere. One man after another would read aloud, sadly to discover his deficiencies of voice and understanding when the passage was read back to him by one who even then, at the beginning of his Harvard career, was a master proving his mettle. Although he developed his style in later days before large audiences he was then the intimate, the personal, the sympathetic reader who made what he was reading shed the gleaming light of the torch of poetry and prose. Years later, it became my duty and pleasure to ask Copeland to read over

the radio, under the auspices of the Boston Transcript, for five successive Christmas seasons, thereby bringing himself and his voice to a wider concourse of listeners.

It should be remembered that all these meetings with students in Copeland's early days at Harvard counted for nothing in marks or towards a degree. They were wholly voluntary, as were his readings in later years. They added much, however, to the knowledge and experience of the students. They were the beginnings of Copeland's desire to make himself helpful, they were the tests of the students' willingness to add to whatever they might gain in more formal classes. Perhaps that is one reason why these assemblages were so small at first. Assuredly there would have been many more then, as there came to be later, if the news of what Copeland was offering had been more widely circulated. They were the molehill out of which rose the high mountain of the future. They remain among the richest memories of a handful of young men who were glad they were specializing in English composition and literature when Copeland came to Harvard.

These memories have lingered and grown and lasted through all the passing years. Copeland's early pupils left Harvard, but Copeland remained for Harvard's good and for the good of all who came within the sphere of his influence. Their number was added to rapidly. Far from him as his students may have drifted, he has remained in the field of their mental vision. They hear about him, they read about him, and once a year those who can, gather at the Harvard Club in New York to hear him read, whenever he is able to come over from Cambridge, to the members of the Charles Townsend Copeland Association and their guests. One of my many regrets is that I have been unable to accept the invitations I have received to be present on those occasions. But we have the Copeland Reader and the Copeland Translations before us whenever we desire to freshen our mem-

ories, and to listen to his voice as it seems to come from his pages. His brief biography of Edwin Booth in the Beacon Biographies series should not be overlooked or forgotten, although I fear it has long been out of print. I am glad to say that I have an inscribed copy of it he sent me at the time of its publication. The date he wrote on it is December 14, 1901.



# 22

## *Copey on the Radio*

ALTHOUGH I HAVE SEEN AND TALKED with Professor Copeland face to face infrequently, I have had conversations by telephone with him more times than I can remember, and I also have received many letters from him. After the Transcript had established its radio station in the spring of 1927, John Cutler, one of my associates on the Transcript staff, and its managing editor for several years, came to me and said: "Wouldn't it be a good idea to get Copeland to give an hour or so of Christmas readings over the radio from our station, WBET." To this I responded: "It certainly would, but I feel sure he won't consent. However, I can try, and I'll write to him at once," which I did. Several days passed without a reply, and I thought my appeal was futile, but at last came a telegram from New York in words like these: "I'll do that broadcast for you, and will make arrangements as soon as I reach home." There was only a little further delay. The arrangements were duly completed, and Copeland made his debut on the radio, after an amusing rehearsal, on the afternoon of the day before Christmas, from station WBET. He read the Cratchits' dinner scene from Dickens's "Christmas Carol," and two of Kipling's poems, "Mandalay" and "The 'Eathen," in the half-hour allotted to him. That was the period for each of his annual Christmas readings, the second

again from WBET and the others from WBZ. After that, they were discontinued at his request, for he did not feel equal to the task, in spite of the pleasure it gave him. Why should I not say that the Transcript sent him a check for his services, and that he returned it with the explanation that he was glad to give them in the interest of the public and for the benefit of his friends near and far.

Since I have said that his radio rehearsal a few days before the first broadcast was amusing, I must tell the story of what happened that afternoon in the WBET studio. There were present at the meeting only myself from the Transcript and two or three men connected with the station—the announcer, the operator, etc. Copeland had called for me at my office a few doors away, and together we walked down Milk Street to the First National Bank building. After introductions, he was asked to sit at the table on which the microphone was placed, while we listened to his voice as it came from the loud speaker on the wall of the outer room. He seemed to be a little disconcerted, for this was his first experience with the radio, but we persuaded him to read or say something for only a minute or two while the door was closed between the two rooms.

As we re-entered the room where he was sitting, he looked up from the microphone and asked anxiously if it had been satisfactory. We told him that he had been perfect, and said that he had been heard distinctly, but there was doubt in his manner and words as he asked plaintively: "Is that so? Are you telling me the truth?" Even then he did not seem to be clear in his mind that we had understood a word; but the repetition of our praise at last reassured him, and he and I left together after making the plans for his coming in to Boston at the hour assigned. I was not with  
was seated at home at my radio, and the  
perfect. I was told later that he created quite a sensation  
the WBET studio, and that it was as good as a comedy to

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NARE

watch him. A number of reporters came from the newspapers, and they gave him some not-to-be-sneered-at publicity the next morning. I think he was disappointed because he received so few letters, but there must have been many who had listened to him, but who did not take the trouble to write. That has been the experience of myself and others.

Among the liveliest of my Copeland memories is a rich recollection of what happened one January morning in 1928. The scenes were St. Paul's Cathedral on Tremont Street, and the adjacent Boston Common. He had invited me insistently to come to his reading at noon in the crypt of that church, and to write my impressions of it for the Transcript. I acquiesced at last, and we made an appointment to meet in a Park Street bookstore just around the corner. With me went E. Bigelow Thompson, then a Transcript reporter, and now a member of the Christian Science Monitor editorial staff, in order that he might write a news story of the occasion for that afternoon's paper. Thompson and I reached the corner of Tremont and Park streets in ample time, and standing on the Common we saw Copeland himself, apparently awaiting us. Crossing the street, we accosted him, and were met with the remark: "I thought I told you to meet me at DeWolfe & Fiske's." We had kept the appointment, to be sure, but not to the letter of Copeland's commands.

Whereupon, without further objection or conversation, we crossed Tremont Street and entered the vestibule of the Cathedral, finding ourselves at once in the midst of a crowd, mainly of women, with one of the clergymen shepherding them in their efforts to get downstairs into the crypt, which was already filled to overflowing. A suggestion was made that the reading be given in the much larger church, thereby accommodating everybody who wanted to listen to Copeland, but he was not receptive to the idea. "I can't read there," he said, "I'm not accustomed to the place." Further arguments were futile, the overflow gathering was forced to go

away in no very happy mood, and together we four went by a circuitous route down across the platform of the crypt to its floor, where we found there almost at the feet of the reader two seats reserved for Thompson and myself, with no other seat in the room unoccupied.

In a few moments, Copeland was seated at the table on which was his customary array of books, and the reading began, with the audience giving its rapt attention to the magic of his voice. For a time the reading proceeded quietly, and then Copeland, quite naturally, became disturbed by the noise that came from the feet of shoppers as they went through a passageway alongside the Cathedral, the sound coming through half-moon-shaped open windows in the upper part of the side wall of the room. At last he could stand it no longer, and stopping his reading he summoned the Rev. Mr. Peck to his table. A brief colloquy ensued, and the clergyman called out: "Roland." No Roland appeared, and the summons was repeated. Still no reply, and then Copeland said, so that the entire audience could hear: "If Roland isn't there, Oliver will do." Then the windows were speedily closed, and the reading proceeded after Copeland had made the further apposite remark: "It is better to read to St. John in the desert than to St. Paul in Tremont Street."

Altogether, perhaps because rather than in spite of these side remarks and interruptions, it was Copeland at his best and a delightful noon in the crypt. But think of the much larger number of listeners he would have had if he had been willing to read upstairs in the Cathedral! My article about the reading appeared in the Transcript of the following Wednesday.

Our letters and telephone conversations have been many, as I have said, and I wish that I were a stenographer in order that I might have set down some of the latter. They would be well worth preserving, and would certainly add vivacity and a revelation of Copeland's personality to my chronicle.

Both the letters and the telephone talks might well be made into a book if they were accessible, but that is impossible, for they date away back into my first days at the Transcript, and have continued almost up to the present moment. Here is one of the first of his letters that came to me only a few months after my Transcript beginnings, and it was addressed to me in my capacity as dramatic editor:

29 GRAYS HALL  
COLL. HARV. CANTAB.  
22nd April 1895

My dear Mr. Edgett,

Will you cause it to appear in your paper—not by way of puff preliminary, but as a mere statement—that my little reading from *Hamlet* in Sever Hall next Wednesday at half-past four o'clock will be open to the public? I should offer to send you tickets if there were any, but how glad should I be to see you there. I spoke at Bryn Mawr last Thursday upon "Hamlet on the Stage," and read some scenes from the play. In the course of the talk I said things about Beerbohm Tree by no means so complimentary to his *Hamlet* as your interesting critique!

Do state clearly in your article just what changes Daly has made in "The Critic."

I meant to begin this note by thanking you as the probable inspirer or even writer of the very agreeable paragraph in the Transcript about my Stevenson piece.

Sincerely yours,

C. T. COPELAND.

The following, as will be seen, bridges the long gap of over forty-three years.

5 CONCORD AVE.,  
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.  
May 18, 1938

Dear Edgett,

Rather than use the scant amount of energy that I have at present in thanking you most heartily for what you have lately done, let me say a general word about what you have been

doing for many years. What you did in the radio matter, beginning at Christmas, 1927, and going on, as I remember, for five years, and all the great encomiums that you have written about me before that time and since are beyond my ability to acknowledge. But this let me say,—that your articles and paragraphs about me have made me far more widely known and esteemed by thousands of people than would have been my lot without your praise. I have said just about this thing to Buxton, of the Herald, some weeks ago; you too, in spite of recognition from other papers and persons,—you too deserve above all others my lasting gratitude.

Think of what you have done for me, and never again fall into the mood of depression which characterized a letter from you about two weeks ago. Your reviews and your department of the Transcript are worth so much to the public, the most intelligent part of the public, that I think you will find strength to go on for many more years.

Believe me, with best hopes for your future,

Your faithful friend,

CHARLES TOWNSEND COPELAND.

EDWIN F. EDGETT, ESQ.

Four months after this, a new management of the Transcript decided that it no longer needed my services. Thus I bring together almost the beginning and almost the end of our correspondence. But this is, I am sure, if fate is kind to both of us, by no means the end, which I hope will not be reached until many more letters have passed between us.

# 23

## *About Barrett Wendell*

ANOTHER POPULAR and influential professor at Harvard before, during and after my days was Barrett Wendell. He had been graduated from Harvard in 1877, and years afterwards Columbia gave him the well deserved honorary degree of LL.D. He became an instructor at Harvard in 1880, and with that title and the higher titles of Assistant Professor and Professor of English, he taught in the halls of the college for no fewer than thirty-seven years. His range was wide, for he wrote textbooks, biographies, a literary history of America, a most useful book on English composition, essays, critical works and plays. He was the author of an historical drama entitled "Raleigh," in which at a special performance in Sanders Theatre he acted the title character.

In his specialty Barrett Wendell was versatile, in his personality he was unique. Literally, there was none and there has been none like him at Harvard, and I doubt if anywhere else. He was pre-eminently a man of distinction in the midst of other men of distinction. He stood alone among them, and above many of them. His appearance, even in an era when men wore beards, with his own beard short and reddish, caught and held the attention. His eccentricities, vocal and otherwise, were extraordinary, and I want it to be understood that in speaking of him so frankly and decisively, I

intend to present him in the most favorable light. His voice was high and staccato, and sometimes it was not easy to interpret exactly what he was saying. He was well aware of these peculiarities, for once when he heard himself speak by means of a phonograph record, I am told he remarked that he was not at all pleased with the result.

Because the man was what he was, a man by himself, my recollections of him are sharp, unlike those of some other men of equal distinction. These memories are exact, vivid and lasting, and they are still enduring without change. Yet the man and his voice, even so clearly as I am able to make a mental picture of him, almost defy description. Words are inadequate to give a satisfactory vision of him to anyone who never saw him, or a portrait of him. When he was talking to his class, or in personal conversation, his vocal mannerisms inevitably increased any listener's interest in him and in what he was saying. He was a living and persistent question mark. Some students insisted that he was affected in his speech and otherwise, but I am positive he was not. It was as natural for him to speak in his own way as it was to be friendly and companionable. I knew him as well as I knew any professor, and I always liked him, the man and the teacher. He helped me, as he helped others, not only in my studies, but in my passing from class to class. It was an inspiration to sit before him, to ask him questions, to answer him, to listen to him, to look at him as he walked through the college yard.

Aristocratic, Barrett Wendell certainly was, for he came of a New York family of high social standing; but snobbish he certainly was not, as I well know through my personal association with him, for I was an ordinary student without means or influence. He was somewhat portly in figure, but there was nothing athletic about him, and I never heard that he had indulged in sports. He was a brother of Evert Jansen Wendell, whose special interests were primarily in the bat-



tles of the Harvard teams and crews, and who was the cheerleader that stood in front of the stands and waved his arms and used his voice so that everybody would be worked into the proper state of enthusiasm when victory was imminent or accomplished. He was also a diligent collector of material pertaining to the stage, and he willed his vast accumulation to the great collection founded by Robert Gould Shaw and now housed in commodious quarters on the top floor of the Widener Library building. Of that more later. And there was another brother, Jacob Wendell, Jr., who after winning distinction on the amateur stage, became a successful professional actor.

If they chanced to know him, graduates and undergraduates would stop to speak to Professor Wendell when they happened to meet him in the yard; if not, they would turn a second glance towards him because they instinctively felt that here must be a man who commanded respect and attention. Such striking personalities as his counted for much among the Harvard faculty, even with the others there who were his comrades in the cause of learning. It was always a pleasure and never a task to join him in the classroom, whether his course was one in English composition or in English literature, both of which he taught with rare zest, skill, knowledge and with the especially keen sympathy of one who himself had sat in the seats of the students.

With Barrett Wendell, we knew that he was at his desk not as an autocrat of learning, but as a helpful teacher. His scholarship was thorough, although he had no such reputation as was Professor Kittredge's in the whole scope of English writing. His touch was as light as his learning was diversified. He had an abundant sense of humor, and it penetrated to the four corners of his room. It was, moreover, a good-natured humor, and he did not indulge in satire or badinage to show off his smartness, or to bring derision to a student. He was frank and honest in everything he said.

Once he asked on an examination paper why in a lecture on Shakspeare he had combined two plays in the hour allotted originally to one. A truth-telling student answered that this had been done for the simple reason that the professor had been absent from the preceding session, and therefore he had to do it in order to keep up with his schedule. "Perfectly right," said Professor Wendell, or words to that effect. Such was Barrett Wendell, a professor never to forget.

One memory of his gracious kindness persists with me. I was taking his elective course in English composition designated as English 12, which required the writing of both daily and fortnightly themes. If a student wanted to take the advanced course, English 5, given by Professor Hill, he must have received the mark of A or B in English 12. I applied to Professor Hill for admission to English 5, stated my mark in the preceding course, and was told by him that Professor Wendell had two grades of B, high and low, and I must find out from him if mine was a high B. This seemed rather unnecessary, as there were always high B's and low B's, otherwise known as B plus and B minus. Nevertheless, I went over to Professor Wendell's rooms, asked the question as to my standing, and was told immediately by him, "Tell Professor Hill that your mark is a high B"—which I did, and was therefore enrolled in English 5. This advanced course in English composition did me little good, perhaps through my own fault, and I do not remember my rank in it, although I should not be surprised if it were no better than C. The exact truth is that I could not arouse any emphatic interest in any part of the course. The effectiveness of those English composition courses depended upon the efficiency of the teachers. Whatever I may have achieved in theme-writing at Harvard was due largely to William Lyon Phelps and Barrett Wendell.

# 24

## *Briggs and Kittredge*

NO LESS OUTSTANDING were Professor Briggs and Professor Kittredge, each in his own individual way. I knew them well, and profited from them, although I was never in a course under Professor Briggs, since his duties were confined in large part while I was there to the deanship, which he filled from 1891 to 1902, prior to his election as president of Radcliffe College. The office of dean is a disciplinary position, but he was not a disciplinarian in the formal sense of the word. He was a friend, a counsellor and an adviser to all the men who were summoned to his office in University Hall, and also to those who sought him there for aid and counsel. I have already related the story of his kindness to me when I feared I should not be permitted to graduate because of my deficiencies in mathematics. He was the best and wisest of deans, and I am quite certain that he can have had no rival in all the long period of Harvard history. Among the published results of his tenure as dean was the writing of several little books whose contents were drawn from his experiences and personal contacts with students. I recall two of these books entitled "Routines and Ideals" and "School, College and Character." He also amused himself and others with the writing of "Riddles in Rhyme." In appearance he was always extremely youthful, and at middle age looked scarcely older than the youngest freshman.

As an entertaining and very much alive professor, George Lyman Kittredge was unequalled. He was a graduate of the Harvard class of 1882, and the holder of honorary degrees from many universities, including Harvard and Oxford. But he never received a Ph.D., the *sine qua non* that is the supposed password to a professorial chair. This seems to prove that that earned degree is not necessarily an index of scholarship, at least in Professor Kittredge's case, for he obtained the highest possible rank without it. Although he was only thirty-four at the time I graduated, he seemed to be much older both in looks and in manner. Perhaps I received this impression because of the reputation of his enormous learning that placed him leagues and leagues above me. The number of his books on Shakspeare and kindred topics had even then begun to grow, and there are so many of them now that it is unnecessary for me to give a list of their titles.

Professor Kittredge was an adept at searching into the unswept corners of knowledge, one of his books being an historical account and critical study of the ancient annual record, still in existence, after more than a hundred years of regular publication, "*The Old Farmer's Almanac.*" Only a short time ago he was retired from his professorial duties after nearly fifty years of uninterrupted service in the classrooms of Harvard. I say "was retired" advisedly. Doubtless the younger generation now in control of many educational institutions does not realize that a man of seventy may readily be a more efficient teacher than a man of thirty. Life begins with many before forty and continues with many after eighty. President Eliot, most famous of American university executives, was at the head of Harvard before, during and after my time, and he served valiantly until his voluntary resignation in 1909 at the age of seventy-five. And he lived to enter his ninetieth year, vigorous in mind and body.

The one class presided over by Professor Kittredge in which I came into close contact with him was English 2, in

which we studied Shakspeare from a philological standpoint rather than as a poet and playwright. The professor's mastery of his subject was disclosed eloquently at every one of its tri-weekly sessions, and in his examination papers he made it evident by the disconcerting nature of his questions. I think I am not unjust to him when I say that he took too much for granted. The course was really elementary and not advanced. Nevertheless, we got a great deal from him, and never before or since have I added so much to my knowledge of Shakspeare as under his teaching. If I was humiliated by the mark of C he gave me at the midyear and final examinations, the fault was mine. How could a young student do anything impressive in the face of his overwhelming command of his subject? He could not, I fear, realize the shallowness of our minds without stopping for a moment to contemplate the depth of his own knowledge.

As a practical man, Professor Kittredge was also outstanding. English 2 could be taken two years in succession, a different group of six plays being read and studied the second year. Professor Child presided over the class during my first year in it, and he wasted many precious moments by using the antiquated method of calling the long roll of attendance at each meeting, three times a week. He thereby encouraged students to shirk their work by taking seats in the rear of the room and then sneaking out of the door the instant he had given the last name, the fact that he was very nearsighted making that device easy. The first day under Professor Kittredge's charge, he announced that he wanted a monitor to check the attendance, and that any member of the class who would like the position for \$50.00 for the year should go over to University 5, the college office, and apply for it. There was my chance. I went over immediately at the close of the session, my application was granted, and I rejoiced in the \$50.00 which was credited on my term bill. Professor Kittredge's

great intellectual qualities remain with me through all the years, and I wish I might be able to pay them the full tribute of homage they deserve.

Thus I end my survey of my Harvard undergraduate years, but by no means my recollections of them, which are endless. If by chance I recur to them in the pages that follow, that will be due to some unexpected resurgence of my memory.

# 25

## *Football and Other Sports*

FOR A FEW MONTHS following my commencement in June, 1894, my steps were indecisive. In order to have some official connection with Harvard, I enrolled in the Graduate School, entering a class in American history under Professor Edward Channing, then one of the mighty men of the faculty. During the next few months, I did a little tutoring in English, read examination papers in Professor Channing's course that brought me a small sum, and that revealed amazing ignorance of the elements of the history of our country by altogether too many men. I wondered why they had taken the trouble to elect it, except that they were possibly under the not rare delusion that it was a "snap course." They were mistaken, and it served them right.

I was also the Harvard correspondent of the New York Times, my chief duty being the sending over by telegraph of the scores of each football game in which the Harvard eleven was a competitor. News of these affairs seemed to the newspaper and its readers to be much more important than the academic activities of the university. This football duty of course necessitated my attendance at a game I loathed, and I loathed the job too. But I did the best I could with my reports, although the result was doubtless short of completeness. I knew practically nothing about football, and know and want to know less now.

I had never taken the slightest interest in football or college sports of any kind. I cared so little about them that I refused to become excited whenever the prestige of Harvard was threatened by a victory of Yale or any other college, and many a time I was disgusted by the exhibition of what was claimed to be loyalty to our alma mater. I remember one occasion when the large lecture room known as Lower Massachusetts was emptied quickly at the beginning of an hour's meeting of a course in which we were all enrolled. We were assembled there in our quest for knowledge, but did we gain it that afternoon? By no means. Football was more important; the exodus being made, without the slightest opposition by the authorities, in order that the team and its associates might be inspired by cheers from their fellow students, as they started on their journey from Harvard Square to take part in the annual game at New Haven. The worst feature in this action seemed to me to be not the deliberate avoidance of their duties by the students, but the neglect of the professor in charge of the class to stop such a disgraceful procedure. If it be said that that could not be done short of open rebellion, then I say so much the worse for Harvard, its faculty and the entire student body.

It has always been a mystery to me how it is possible for a human being—man or woman, boy or girl—to derive so unlimited a pleasure from hitting a ball back and forth over a net; or from chasing another kind of ball after it has been hit by a certain form of club of varying shape, size and name around a field so that it may fall into a hole; or from racing, with ten other men, at the risk of life and limb over what is called a gridiron in their frantic efforts to make a goal or a touchdown. Furthermore, the mystery deepens in my mind as I listen to the loud-voiced rapture of those who are assisting at those games simply as spectators. It might be thought from their enthusiasm that they were a part of the game. From the vigor of the players and the demonstrations in the



seats it would seem as if they imagined that the destinies of the world were at stake.

I am also equally mystified over the joy taken by the men and women who sit at tables with vari-colored cards—some decorated only with spots, to be sure—that they slap down at the proper moments. Yet all over the country, and I suppose in other countries, both outdoors and indoors, millions of persons are doing those very things in the name of sport or games, even though now the call of war is resounding loudly. If you talk the matter over with a tennis player, a golfer or a football addict, he will probably tell you that the exercise and the open air are doing him a lot of good; and conversation with a bridge player will probably elucidate the remark that he or she—it is usually she—is thereby stimulating the memory and exercising the wits. I have omitted to mention baseball here because I think that our great national game is sensible and worth while, even though the interest in it is too often carried to excess. And if I were an Englishman, I should doubtless say the same of cricket.

As a matter of fact, all these games or sports are very well if they are not overdone, as are many other things in life, but as a rule they go to such lengths in the taking up of time and the wasting of energy that their exponents become obsessed with the idea that there is no substitute for them in the way of healthful exercise and recreation. The space given in the daily newspapers is eloquent evidence not necessarily of their value, but certainly of their popularity. Hundreds of thousands of daily readers turn first to the sports pages for their regular reading. I never look at them. In answer to the plea in favor of outdoor life, it may truthfully be said that an equal amount of physical good may be gained by the wielding of shovel, spading fork, hoe, rake or other garden utensil, and may result in equal satisfaction even if the amateur horticulturist is not as successful in his results as he desires to be.

In reply to the second claim of the stimulus to the wits and

memory of the card or other indoor game player—I myself was at one time an ardent cribbage and bezique player—it may with equal if not greater truth be said that a large amount of intellectual exercise may be gained from reading. To me, a book in the hand is worth any number of tennis rackets, footballs or playing cards, and all the other appurtenances of those games. But this is, of course, my peculiar prejudice; and prejudice, as you know, is good for the soul that may become stagnant without it. Efforts have been made to lessen the size of incoming Harvard classes, but I have never heard of any project to debar those young men whose sole interest in college is centred in sports, clubs or social activities. I wish there might be one. That is simply another of my impractical heresies.

To end this discussion, which some of my readers may think has gone far enough, I confess gladly that during my four years I entered the gymnasium but once, and then as a visitor. I understand that in these modern days a freshman is compelled to take one course in athletics, such as swimming. I should not have gone to Harvard had that been the rule in my day. The very idea of compulsory sports or athletics is too absurd to call for argument. Neither was I a member of any of the social societies or secret clubs, Greek-lettered or otherwise, which so many college men consider an essential part of their lives, and which they think are necessary to fill their days and nights with pleasure, gaiety and revelry. The craze for hazing that had brought the college world into disrepute had vanished before 1890, yet there survived relics of its absurdities in the initiatory antics of more than one secret society. I had no desire to submit myself to their public humiliation, especially after I had noted the ghastly appearance of a friend the day after he had become a member of one of them, and after I had seen more than one young man making a fool of himself in street cars and other public places. These performances, even if I had cared for any of them, took

too much money and time, and I had neither to spare. Nor was I willing to sacrifice myself on the altar of my personal pride. To make myself voluntarily an ass—I apologize to the ass—in the outdoor haunts of man had no appeal to me. Too often we do that unintentionally among our friends.

# 26

## *My Hour Strikes*

DURING THE SIX MONTHS after my graduation, one of my most agreeable activities was to write about the theatre for a Boston weekly paper called *The Beacon*, for which service I received the munificent sum of \$5.00 a week, which the editor was willing to confess would scarcely account for my carfares. I had been practicing that sort of combined work and pleasure since early in 1889 in the columns of the *Cambridge Chronicle*, the *East Boston Free Press* and the *Boston Budget*, with occasional articles in more important papers like the *Boston Journal* and the *Boston Transcript*. Clippings of all these articles I preserved in scrapbooks that are still in existence; but it was a habit I finally abandoned before many more years had passed. Do I wish I had kept it up? Sometimes I do and sometimes I don't, without being able to give any reason for those variable states of mind.

As will be seen further on, the work on the *Journal* and the *Transcript* was to result to my great advantage before many months had elapsed. It was my ambition to become dramatic editor of a leading daily newspaper, and I found this casual work on small papers to be admirable prentice writing, even though it put but little money in my purse. It gave me free entrance into the Boston theatre; it enabled me to voice my opinions and impressions of plays and players;

and, wonder of wonders, it finally brought me the very position I was seeking. I did not have to wait long for the outcome. Just before the dawn of 1895 my ambition was unexpectedly fulfilled.

It was in December of the year of my graduation that my brightest day, up to that time, dawned, and gladly I gave up my Harvard and other interests. Many Harvard graduates seek the yard and all its surroundings frequently, but I have never attended any Class Day or Commencement exercises since my own. In all these forty-five years, my only journeys to Harvard, although I have passed it often, have been for the purpose of visiting the Theatre Collection in the Widener Library. I am not bragging about this; I am merely stating a fact. College and class reunions of any kind give me no pleasure whatever, and I have never had any time to spare for them. Some years ago a classmate called on me at the Transcript and asked me if I would attend one of the regular class dinners at the Harvard Club in Boston and give them a little talk about my professional work. That, however, was the last way to win my consent and attendance. He repeated the request several times on later visits, but I was implacable, and at last he gave it up as a bad job. I am glad to be a Harvard alumnus, and must let those words suffice without the further glory of being an afterdinner speaker or anything of that sort.

## *On the Transcript at Last*

I MUST GET ON WITH MY STORY, and reject further interpolative ideas that come into my mind. To reach the point at last, December, 1894, arrived, and with it a new life for me. My chance came through another's misfortune. Francis H. Jenks, who had been dramatic editor of the Transcript for some years, died suddenly on Sunday December 16th. I had known him slightly, had called on him at his office, and had done a little writing for him during my undergraduate days. I read the news of his death in the morning paper of the next day, and in the first mail of Tuesday I received a letter from William E. Bryant, dramatic editor of the Boston Journal, to whose paper I had been an incidental and always a welcome contributor on matters of the theatre. He asked me why I didn't apply for Mr. Jenks's place on the Transcript, and told me that he had seen Mr. Clement the day before and had said a good many good words for me, adding that Mr. Clement had replied that he would like to see me.

Every word of Mr. Bryant's letter has remained in mind ever since. Without it as an incentive, I would not have gone into the Transcript that Tuesday morning. ~~And indeed~~ it, however, I took a car at an early West Somerville, where I was living ~~with my parents~~ ~~and~~ ~~was~~ for something to turn up. I had a

interview with Mr. Clement in his editorial office, and was told by him to come in again the following morning when he would take me down to the business office. For three days running I repeated that visit, being put off from day to day until finally Friday morning I was told by the management that I could have the position and to begin work on Monday morning. I shall never forget my debt of gratitude to Mr. Bryant. If he had not written me, the story of my life would be far different from what it appears in these pages.

Why I was kept waiting, I never could discover, except that perhaps that was the way they had for preventing me from thinking they were anxious to obtain my services. The salary they offered me was small, but I would not have refused it if it had been half as much, so eager was I to obtain that position on the Transcript. I was a young man, and ought to be made to realize the contrast between my age and Mr. Jenks's. My first day at the Transcript was the day before Christmas, and never did I have a more wonderful Christmas, and never was I happier when it was over and Wednesday came. I wanted to begin work then in earnest. My first message had been sent to Miss Evelyn Torrey, who was at that time living in Worcester, and who became my wife a year and a half later. This good news to her made the occasion one of double rejoicing, although I did not see her for several weeks thereafter.

The Monday morning of December 24, 1894, found me ensconced in a chair at my desk in the Transcript editorial rooms, in the very position on the very newspaper where I had longed to be. There I was to remain, in that position as dramatic editor, and later as literary editor, with the exception of my short stay in London and with David Belasco in this country, during a period of no fewer than forty-four years until, to give the exact date, September 17, 1938. If I am ever inclined for any reason, well founded or not, to bewail any misfortune that might have come to me, I think of that

day and of the days that followed. They counteracted all the ills my mind was heir to, and those ills were few indeed.

Office work on a newspaper was new to me, but I knew and understood the quality and quantity of my position. My incidental experiences as a contributor of newspaper articles, especially upon the theatre and everything pertaining to it, stood me in good stead. I took to my duties as though I had been born to accomplish them. I jumped into the midst of things, for I had served no apprenticeship as a reporter or in any other subordinate capacity. An editor I remained, and I am certain that this is an unusual and remarkable record in journalism. The greater number of journalists have gone from one position to another on the same paper, or have transferred their allegiance through a series of changing newspapers. Their careers have therefore been more varied and perhaps more lively and versatile than mine. The average journalist almost invariably works up through the ranks, sometimes from the post of office boy, to a reportorial, editorial or occasionally to a proprietorial chair. But I sat there undaunted and almost irremovable, contented to stay there. I take no credit for this stability. It was nothing less than good luck, the good luck that, in spite of some temporary setbacks, followed me all my days.



*My Fellow Editors*

THE RECORD of the rest of my personal and professional life is practically the chronicle of my years as a Transcript editor, with a few interludes in which I was engaged in other undertakings as a writer without leaving my editorial place. I entered into close association with as congenial and companionable a group of associates as could be wished. Day by day we talked and wrote, each in his own specialty, as happy fellow workers. The adjoining semiprivate room was the habitat of Edward H. Clement, the editor-in-chief, who had been there about twenty years when I arrived. On and off the Transcript he went through a number of vicissitudes, diverting himself in his leisure hours by writing plays that were seldom acted, and painting pictures that were rarely exhibited. In these avocations he was in the good company of his many newspaper comrades who are addicted to the vain ambition to do something aside from their regular professions. Some of us are not content to walk on level ground, but like to climb ladders with slight chance of reaching the topmost rung.

Mr. Clement was notably distinguished and impressive in his personal appearance, and we all liked him. He was, however, inclined to chase rainbows without realizing that he would never be able to reach the fabled place where the end of them touched the earth. There was a curious mental angle

in him that caused him to think that he could change the orbit of the world so as to make it revolve around the sun in a circle rather than in its normal course of an ellipse. He would irritate the editorial writers by slight alterations in their articles that made what they wrote seem illogical. "Why, Clement," said one of them to him, "you have made the Transcript seem to be a fool. If you didn't like the editorial, why didn't you leave it out altogether?" He became an ardent anti-imperialist when the Spanish War aftermath was an almost universal cause of contention, and he would give his editorial approval to such reforms as antivivisection and woman suffrage so illogically that even those in favor of them did not second his methods of argument. Nevertheless, we were all regretful when he was replaced by another, remaining for a time in the writing of miscellaneous features.

Later years brought into the editorial chair a succession of experienced journalists that included Robert Lincoln O'Brien, who was first a Transcript reporter and then for a long period our Washington correspondent; later he went over to the Boston Herald, and eventually became chairman of the United States Tariff Commission by appointment of President Hoover. Following him in sequence came Frank B. Tracy for a brief period, James T. Williams, Jr., for thirteen years beginning in 1913, and then up to a few years ago Henry T. Claus, who had begun his Transcript career in 1905 as an assistant in the school and college news department. These editors had especial full charge of the supervision of the daily work on the editorial page and the staff of editorial writers.

The editorial writers, under the direct supervision of the editor, are the men on a newspaper staff who comment day by day upon the affairs of the world from China to Peru, as Dr. Johnson would say, and thereby are "moulders of opinion." On the Transcript these were in my early days Edward W. Hazewell, son of a former Boston newspaper writer of

conspicuous reputation; Ebenezer Nelson, who died soon after my coming and was succeeded by Robert G. Fitch, well known in the local world of journalism, and who had been a fire commissioner of the city of Boston and also editor of the *Boston Post*; and Edward E. Edwards, a humorist who for many years wrote in addition to his editorial articles the joke paragraphs headed "Facts and Fancies," and who at the time of his death in 1905 left a supply of them in manuscript that lasted four weeks. He had had a picturesque newspaper life, having begun work in the pressroom of the *Transcript* in the early sixties, leaving to enlist in the Union army, and thereafter going through the mill successively as proof reader, state house reporter, and editorial commentator, eventually to become dramatic editor in my place when I went to London in 1899. He was my constant luncheon-companion for some time, and parenthetically it may be said that he was by no means as solemn as he looked.

The staff of editorial writers was at that time completed by a young woman, Minna Caroline Smith, who was as good a companion as the others. Her special duty was to write brightly and lightly on the odds and ends of topics that were supposed to be too trivial for the masculine brain. The music critic was William F. Apthorp, an expert of national reputation who also wrote the valuable and entertaining notes for the Boston Symphony Orchestra program. When Mr. Apthorp left Boston some years afterwards to make his home in Europe, he was succeeded in this latter task by Philip Hale, for many years the bright and shining light of the editorial page and of the music and drama departments first of the *Boston Journal* and later of the *Boston Herald*. The art critic was William Howe Downes, a man of rare facility in his specialty, and the literary editor was Charles E. Hurd, whom I was to replace six years afterwards, and of whom I shall have something more to say hereafter. I was the youngest of them all, not yet twenty-eight. Changes in this group

of course came with the passing years, but it is notable that many of them remained into the days of the World War. Mr. Downes, thirteen years my senior and long among the retired, is the only one who remains on the earth with me.

Another member of the staff, not there during my first days, was Joseph Edgar Chamberlin, who wrote *The Listener* column for years, and who later added to it another personal survey mainly of outdoor life called *The Nomad*. I venture to say that we had hundreds of readers who took the Transcript for the main purpose of reading and following his mental reactions. He was on the Transcript, with occasional intervals of absence, to the end of his long life of over eighty years. In his younger days he had been connected with several newspapers, some of them as far away as Chicago. He was a perfect example of the journalist who has never gone to college, but who was better equipped for his work, wiser, more cultivated, more skilful in his writing, more capable in every way, than have been thousands of others in his profession. He wrote the history of the Transcript that was published in book form in our centenary year of 1930.

# 29

## *Nearing the End of an Era*

WHEN I BEGAN MY WORK as dramatic editor, motion pictures were unknown and unheard of except possibly in inventive minds that had a far-away vision of them. I was present in the audience at Keith's Theatre when the first one was displayed in Boston as a minor feature of the regular vaudeville program. This must have been in 1897 or 1898. As was customary for some time, nothing but scene pictures was given on the screen; then at last came the pictures presenting the action of plays; and finally the silence was broken by the intervention of the human voice and other sounds. But all these developments came after I had left the dramatic for the literary editor's chair. That change was to my advantage, for I had been concentrating my activities and attention upon real plays on a real stage as they were acted by real actors, and did not care for the shadowy illusions of the screen. I am sure I could not easily have accustomed myself to the transfer from persons in the flesh to images of persons portrayed by means of a film, a camera and a screen.

My reminiscences of those early days deal only with the theatre as it was in the epoch when the stage was a stage. At that time the most important dramatic fare was furnished by the stars, the travelling companies of Augustin Daly from his theatre in New York, of Charles Frohman from the Empire

Theatre and of Daniel Frohman from the Lyceum Theatre, to mention only a few. The epoch of Edwin Booth had not long before passed, but Sir Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Beer-bohm Tree, John Hare, Charles Wyndham and a few others were still coming to us from England. We were seeing the new plays by Sir Arthur Pinero, Henry Arthur Jones and their comrades in dramatic arms. In Boston we had also the famous permanent company at the Boston Museum, and the new twice-a-day stock company at the Castle Square, with the vaudeville and burlesque houses to supply us with a cheaper and diversified entertainment.

My own part in all this was to follow the course of events day by day, to record them in the pages of the Transcript devoted to the drama and music, and to attend, with the aid of the staff who were glad to substitute for me, the opening performance of every new play, or its revival, that came to any of the Boston theatres, then about a dozen in number. I recall all this with a regret that is strong despite its futility. 'There is no sense in mourning over the things that are dead and gone, over the things that can return only when memory brings back echoes of the pleasure they used to give us. Perhaps our world now is better than our world then, but in any event it is still our world.

During my regime, we would give in the Transcript anywhere from one to half a dozen columns every day to the theatre and its doings, with a special page or two on Saturday. For reviews of operas, the symphony orchestra and other concerts, and an occasional play, I had the expert assistance of Mr. Apthorp, whose work was as a critic, without editorial functions, and I would look after everything else. Of course I oversaw daily the make-up, or arrangement, of my articles, going up into the composition room for that purpose. I wonder as all this surges through my mind that I did it so easily, and that I enjoyed going to the theatre so often. Three or four times a week was my schedule, but that would be too

much for me now, not merely because I am older, but also because the theatre and all about it is not the same theatre.

Its entire aspect has changed. The new plays have become "abstracts and brief chronicles of the times," a phrase which as Shakspeare used it refers not to the plays themselves but to the actors in them; the technique and the personnel of the dramatic companies have changed into something almost unrecognizable in my eyes. In those days when I looked at the names of the players as they were set down in print on a program or in the newspapers, there was scarcely one I did not know either personally or as a member of his profession; nowadays as I look at such a list, there is unlikely to be one who is not a stranger to me. There is nothing remarkable about this happening during the passage of almost fifty years, and it now seems fortunate for me that I forsook the world of the stage for the world of books. I do not have to leave my home so often, and return there some time after midnight.

Coincidences in the names of the men on the Transcript in its several departments from year to year are worth noting. At one time three pairs of these bore the unusual combination of Edwin Francis for their given names, and all are no longer there. These are Edwin Francis Hathaway (always referred to as Ned Hathaway by his associates), who antedated me in his service, and who for many years was head of the subscription department in the business office, and who was forced out at the beginning of a new management in 1936; Edwin Francis Melvin (popularly known as Eddie Melvin), who was H. T. Parker's assistant and who succeeded him as dramatic editor, but who was summarily discharged by letter in 1936 while he was away on his vacation; and myself, who in 1938 was told to depart at a moment's notice. So gracious were the manners of our latter-day employers! And in addition, there were two Fred Allens, two Fred Youngs and two George Sargents at the same time. George Sargent is mentioned by me later; and Fred Young was until lately the

veteran superintendent of the pressroom. Another of my special friends was Arthur H. Hayward, our accountant and auditor, a collector of and lecturer on antique lamps, and author of a valuable book on that subject. He too was one of the victims of peremptory dismissal.

So many changes were made in the personnel and scenes of the Transcript that if any of my early companions were to return to this sphere, they would not recognize the place where they had long been working. I was moved from one room to another from time to time, but about half my years were spent, with my secretary, in a room at the front of the fifth floor of the Milk Street building, across the way from the side wall and sloping roof of the Old South Meeting House. Many vicissitudes brought about other violent changes in the structure and arrangements of the two buildings, which were finally joined above the street floor by means of an extension over the alley, where they appeared to stand as a pair of inseparable Siamese twins. With my department, I was one of the first to be moved into the rear building, which stands on the site of the birthplace of Benjamin Franklin.

Strange to say, the Transcript never had, as have all newspapers of equal standing, an adequate library, and we were thereby greatly handicapped in our work. What few reference books we had were scattered about the buildings, some of the most important in my room, some in the city editor's and telegraph editor's rooms, and others in a room that was for courtesy's sake called the library, but which was incomplete and ill arranged. Upon its clippings in envelopes much labor had been spent, but they were never up to date and were difficult of access. We never had a specially trained librarian who had grown up in the profession. Except for a few recent annual volumes the files of the Transcript from its beginning in 1830 were kept far away in a storage warehouse!



# 30

## *Our Managing Editor*

IT NOW BECOMES one of the pleasantest moments in the writing of these pages to speak of one man who, on my arrival there, was going through an introductory period that was finally to place him at the head of the entire management of the Transcript. He was George S. Mandell, grandson of Henry W. Dutton, leader of the firm that established the paper in 1830. After his graduation from Harvard in 1890, Mr. Mandell began a course of training for the purpose of familiarizing himself with all the details of newspaper work and organization. He was made the managing editor soon after my coming, and that title he held during the remainder of his life, succeeding his father, Samuel P. Mandell, as president of the Boston Transcript Company at the latter's death. The elder Mandell had married one of the Dutton daughters, and for many years the paper was owned, but not controlled, by her in association with her three sisters and a sister-in-law, widow of a son who had died early in life.

To speak about George Mandell is to speak about one who was the comrade and friend of us all, from the composition room on the top floor through all the departments down to the pressroom in the basement where the paper was printed and mailed. After the great Boston fire in 1872, in which the Transcript Building was destroyed, a new structure was

erected covering its old ground on Washington Street, with the inclusion of an additional narrow lot on the corner of Milk Street. Its interior has been altered by the taking down and putting up of partitions many times, through these many years, the building in its rear on Milk Street before mentioned being acquired in the nineties, with its floors and rooms taken over from their renters as more space was needed for Transcript uses. The paper now utilizes the whole with the exception of the ground-floor store.

All this was the region over which Mr. Mandell had full authority. No, this word is not accurate. He presided over it carefully and inconspicuously. None of us will ever forget his cheery "Good morning" whenever we encountered him, whether at his desk, or hurrying through the buildings on a mission from one floor or room to another. Elevators seemed unnecessary for him, for he always rushed up or down stairs. For generosity, kindness, helpfulness and good will, his equal could not be found. Again and again I have reason to remember his graciousness and his desire to make any request a question and not a command.

He came to me one day with just such a question: "How's your heart?" My reply naturally was, "All right," for I had an inkling of what was coming. It was another question. "What do you say to putting on the first page of the Book Section a review of a book about horses I will write, with some pictures?" "Of course I think it is a good idea," I said, "for I want to diversify the Book Section as much as possible." "Then I'll write the review and lay out the pictures for you." And he did, but he would not allow the review to be signed, even only with his initials. "No, no," he said, "there's no need of it," and that was always his attitude whenever it was suggested that his signature should appear in the paper.

Mr. Mandell's recreative specialty was horses, of which he had a large stable on his country estate in Hamilton, where at one time he held the position of Master of Fox Hounds in

Essex County. Even after he had lost two sons, one in the aviation forces of the World War, and the other by an accident in a polo game, his liking for horses did not abate, and I was surprised when he told me that he would like to review a book on polo. He had a bad fall from a horse that laid him up for several weeks, and resulted in a temporary lameness that did not, however, delay his speed in climbing the stairs. While he was in my room one day on an errand, I said to him: "Mr. Mandell, why don't you telephone me when you want to see me, and I'll come down at once." "No, thank you," he replied, "I'm still able to get over the stairs, and besides you have more work to do than I have." That was George Mandell, or "G. S. M.," as he was generally called. My stories about him are many, but these must suffice. He died suddenly one Saturday afternoon in August, 1934, his body being found lying on the ground under a tree on his country estate in Hamilton.

*Aboard for London*

AFTER FOUR AND A HALF YEARS on the Transcript as dramatic editor, my wife and I went to London in response to a summons from my friend Walter Smith to assist him in the editorship of a weekly illustrated newspaper somewhat of the type of The Graphic, the Illustrated London News, and The Sphere, this last a comparatively new journal founded and edited by Clement K. Shorter. Walter had gone over to London a few months after his graduation from Harvard, and he had quickly formed a connection with the publishing house of George Newnes, Ltd., eventually becoming editor of the American edition of the Strand Magazine. The new paper, The King, was his idea. It was definitely worth while, but competition and rivalry proved too much for it, and it expired shortly, but not until after we had returned home, perfectly satisfied that our London experiences had not been longer. Catching a great deal of Walter Smith's enthusiasm for the scenes and life of the British capital, I had had a desire to live and work in London, and in spite of my quick return home, I am not sorry to have the advantage of pleasant memories of our stay there. After our departure, Walter remained with the Newnes publishing house for some time, but he finally changed his alliance to join Cassell & Company, the London book and magazine publishers, with whom he be-

came chief editor, making many more friends in the English literary and journalistic fields.

Shortly after going over to London in the fall of 1894, Walter was followed by the young lady to whom he had become engaged while he was a student at Harvard—Martha Elizabeth Fletcher, daughter of a physician in Pepperell, Massachusetts—and they were married at Stoke Poges, amid the romantic scenes of Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard." Subsequently he served the Transcript for several years as London correspondent on bookish matters, being one of a succession of English newspaper writers, each of whom was an able worker in his field. At one time the Transcript published regular literary letters from England, France and Germany, but at last they were abandoned when financial retrenchment became necessary. They were among the most valuable and essential features of the Transcript that made it a substantial literary authority under my direction. The Paris letters were written by Alvan F. Sanborn, who served as our general correspondent there for many years. After the outbreak of the World War, Walter Smith returned to his native country with his family, engaging in free-lance work until his invalidism and death in 1930. His home a part of the time was in New York, with occasional visits to his wife's old home in Pepperell, Massachusetts.

Both of us, my wife and I, found no small enjoyment in the novel and changing diversities of London life, and by its contrasts with the American ways we had been accustomed to through all the preceding years of our existence. But my work did not please me, and not long after our arrival we determined that we would grasp the first opportunity to go back home. We kept in mind our plans to return, awaiting a longed-for prospect that finally came. For months to come we were in the midst of an exciting era in the history of England, for it was the period of the outbreak of the Second Boer War, and it took the British some time to adjust themselves

to the idea that the South African farmers were a valiant fighting people that could not be conquered in a month. For instance, when the news of the relief of Mafeking, after its long siege, reached London in the course of a night, they were as frantic with joy as if they had made a conquest of the whole world. Cheering crowds walked and rode atop the buses and in hansom cabs, making a tremendous din through the rest of the dark hours and all the ensuing day. Then at last they quieted down, became normal, went on with the war, and at last won victories that meant peace resulting in a new and reconstructed South Africa. When anybody since then has commented to me about the imperturbability of the British, I always have something emphatic in denial of that assertion.

## *First Impressions of Our New Home*

A GLANCE AT THE BEGINNING of these London months of ours carries me back to the day when we left New York aboard the American liner *New York*. It was Wednesday morning July 12, 1899, and exactly a week later when we went on deck after breakfast we saw rising out of the sea far towards the eastern horizon the pillar of Bishop's Rock lighthouse on the outermost of the Scilly Isles. I had not imagined that the sea for an entire week could be so empty. We had seen only a few vessels of any kind during the voyage, and none was near enough for us to signal. By noon of that Wednesday we were abreast of Bishop's Rock, and soon were steaming past Land's End. All that afternoon we were coasting along the southern shores of England, much nearer than I had thought we could venture. Not far east of Land's End we saw the topmasts of a steamship above the waters close in to the shore, and were told that it was the wreck of the *Paris*, our sister ship of the American Line which only two weeks previously had run aground on the reefs called the Manacles.

As the evening lengthened I was surprised to notice the long continuance of daylight, until I remembered that we were some ten degrees further north than the latitude of New York. Later during the London midwinter we had the opposite experience of twilight coming on a little after three in

the afternoon. We passed the red flashing light on the Needles at the southwestern end of the Isle of Wight, and after voyaging slowly up the Solent and into Southampton Water, we docked at about one o'clock Thursday morning. Remaining aboard till after dawn, little sleep coming to us amid the excitement of being in a strange land, we took the regular boat train at about eight, making our first stop just outside Waterloo Station in London in order that the guard might open the doors of the carriages to take up our tickets. He could not walk through the train and its compartments for that purpose.

Among our first impressions of the novel English scenes as we sped through Hampshire and Surrey on our way to London were the fields of grain (the English call it "corn," which to us means Indian corn or maize) with bright red poppies sprinkled in their midst. Something else strange to our American eyes were the solid brick or stone farmhouses and other buildings in both town and country. There was no wooden structure anywhere. Forests are too sparse in England to allow their wood to be used for building purposes. During a year in London and its suburbs we never became accustomed to the uniform line of its streets enclosed in nothing but brick houses and blocks of all sorts of color. The buildings of course had all been darkened by the atmospheric effect of the passing centuries and the results of the soft-coal grime mingled with the dirty fog. A red brick building was so rare that the adjective "red" was always used in referring to it. If I ever go to London again, which is unlikely, its peculiar odor will rise to my nostrils as I approach its outskirts. It still lingers in my memory, and I am quite sure there is nothing like it anywhere in the world.

We lived in London in what are known as "lodgings," which means in our case that we had two rooms in South Hampstead at the foot of its famous heath, and on the northern edge of the district called St. John's Wood. Few English novelists dealing with suburban scenes fail to mention this



section of greater London. It is now a checkerboard of streets bordered by houses in blocks, detached or semidetached, behind brick walls of varying heights, but in ancient days it had contained enough trees to justify its name. One of the rooms in our lodgings was on the ground floor raised by a flight of outdoor steps above the street level, and approached through an entrance gate. This room served as a combination sitting and dining room, and the other room was our chamber on the top floor up two flights. Both were commodious and in the front of the house.

These rooms were heated in winter by soft-coal fires in open grates and were comfortable. The gas chandelier in the dining room was a curiosity to us, for it could be lowered to bring its light nearer to the table, and raised again when artificial illumination was not necessary. We often wondered how it was constructed so that it would not leak and asphyxiate us. Many a winter morning did we look out into the blankness of the fog and see no signs of habitation across the street. The London fog is by no means the clean gray fog of the New England coasts, but a dark substance mingled with the smoky London atmosphere. I have been on a morning bus going from the Swiss Cottage station in South Hampstead towards the City, about a four-mile journey, when the conductor was obliged to walk beside the horses to prevent them from climbing up on the sidewalk, or from turning around the corner into every side street. And so damp was the winter air that many who ventured out into it would wear mouth-mufflers to keep it from penetrating into their lungs. Yet I was told by some of our acquaintances that our winter in London was not very foggy!

Living in lodgings in London gave us our rooms and service for thirty shillings a week, the meals being cooked in and served from the kitchen in the basement by a maid who would apologize if she inadvertently came into the dining room without the badge of her profession—her cap. Her name

—I am amazed that I remember it—was Emma Berry; but it is not surprising for me to recall that her mistress bore the distinguished surname of Marlowe. She once made the remark that she was glad to realize she was not a lady, which was perfectly proper from the English class point of view. The food was ordered and supplied at our expense, and we still have the account books that were rendered once a week in which were entered the regular and incidental charges, the latter including fivepence for each scuttle of coal used in the fireplace, and fivepence more weekly for the cost of condiments on the table. It was really an economical way to live, and it gave something of the convenience of housekeeping with little of its bother and responsibilities.

# 33

## *Some London Scenes*

LIFE IN LONDON had its amenities and humors to gratify us at the moment and to fill the treasury of our memories. The front-door handle did not turn to enable us to enter our home, as do the handles of American front doors, but was stationary midway across the panel. There was no knob over the keyhole, and the key itself was so huge, literally, that I was compelled to carry it in an upper vest pocket instead of on my key ring. All this reminded me of Gilbert and his lines in "Pinafore," where we are told by Sir Joseph Porter about his youthful labors long before he became First Lord of the Admiralty:

When I was a lad I served a term  
As office-boy to an Attorney's firm.  
I cleaned the windows and I swept the floor,  
And I polished up the handle of the big front door.  
I polished up that handle so carefuller  
That now I am the Ruler of the Queen's Navee.

The surroundings of these lodgings at 29 Fairfax Road, South Hampstead, N.W. (so ran the post-office address), were a bit of old suburban London. There was a long block of shops next door where we could make small purchases of almost everything necessary to the maintenance of a house-

hold. There was the chemist (druggist), the wine and tea merchant (grocer), the greengrocer (vegetable dealer), the newsman (periodical dealer and stationer), the purveyor of meats or butcher (provision dealer), the fishmonger (fish dealer), and the ironmonger (hardware dealer). It matters not what we call them, the English and the American designations are all equally understandable.

Of course there was a post office near by. One post office indeed? There were no fewer than six post-office stations almost at our very doors. Some of these gave complete service, and in others the postal banks and telegraph service were not included. But certainly six where we could buy postage stamps and mail letters were a convenience unknown in this land. Moreover, there were five or six deliveries of mail a day, the last at half past nine in the evening. It humiliates me to confess that in Arlington, the Boston suburb where we live in this year 1940, about the same distance out of town as was South Hampstead, we are lucky if we have two deliveries a day. And the post office is about a mile away, and much further from other residences. And in addition, deliveries of milk were made at our London lodgings several times morning, afternoon and evening.

The newspaper office in Catherine Street, just off the Strand, where I worked after removals from two temporary quarters a short distance away, had been a residence in the heart of London. It contained a bathroom on the third floor, and other housekeeping conveniences. Unhappily for me, since I spent an entire winter in London, the fireplace was at the further side of the spacious room from my desk, and I would be compelled frequently to jump out of my chair to warm my hands at its blaze in order to be able to hold my pen or tap my typewriter. Not far from our offices were many theatres, but I had little spare time to enter them, although I did manage to see Henry Irving in his own Lyceum Theatre, and Beerbohm Tree at Her Majesty's Theatre a little further

away. The Gaiety Theatre was at the Strand corner of Catherine Street, and the Drury Lane Theatre (its official name was Theatre Royal, Drury Lane) was at the upper end of the street, and not on Drury Lane, upon which its rear abutted. But since the district was known as the Drury Lane district, its name was pertinent.

The costermongers came from the country into London every morning to dispose of their vegetable, fruit and flower wares at the Covent Garden Market, which filled a large area on one side of which stood the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden. They drove a little animal of the donkey species hitched to their carts, or barrows. He was called a "moke," and the first time I heard his bray through my windows, I thought there must be an iron foundry in full operation near by, but was quickly told by my office-mate that the noise came from the small and inoffensive animal I had seen in the streets. Frequently I would hear from the sidewalk ("pavement," they call it in London) a reiterated word that sounded like "Mink." Careful researches resulted in the disclosure that he was saying "Meat," and that he was a vendor of meat for cats—in a business district, if you please, that still contained many dwellings of the lower order, for the Drury Lane section was then the harborage of a nest of slums.

# 34

## *Homeward Bound*

OUR STAY IN LONDON ended on September 15, 1900, the fourth anniversary of our marriage, and a little less than fourteen months after our arrival. It was one of the happiest anniversaries of our united lives, for were we not going home? Both of us were glad to leave, although we were also glad that we had been there. Since that day we have made a division of our lives into two parts, before London and after London, and now the latter is much the longer. We took the boat train from London at the Euston Station to Liverpool at noon, finding ourselves exactly four hours later at the Prince's Landing Stage on the banks of the river Mersey, our luggage having been checked directly through to Boston so that we had nothing to do but go aboard the steamship. Except for slow-ups at a few stations and junctions we had gone through at the rate of fifty miles an hour without a stop.

We have never been on such a comfortable and smooth railway journey. The English trains are light, and they glide along with an easy swaying movement, with none of the bumping and jerking so common in this country. Of Liverpool we saw practically nothing, and from the moment of our departure down the Mersey we were enshrouded in a continuous thick fog. All that evening and all day Sunday we were steaming along through the Irish Sea and out into

the Atlantic Ocean without catching a glimpse of the coasts of England, Wales and Ireland. It was altogether different from our approach to England the year before, when we saw everything there was to see from ship to shore. Our boat, sailing direct from Liverpool to Boston, was the *Devonian* of the Leyland Line, on her first voyage across the Atlantic. Some fifteen years afterwards she was torpedoed by the Germans.

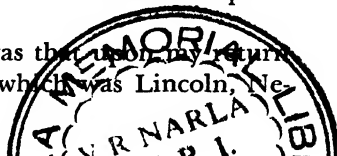
Towards the end of our stay in London, David Belasco brought over Mrs. Leslie Carter for an engagement at the Garrick Theatre in his sensational play known as "Zaza," and with them came Charles Emerson Cook, an old friend and college associate of mine who had been with that eminent playwright and producer for some time. Through him I was engaged to join the Belasco forces in the business and touring departments, but within less than a year I became again a Transcript editor. About two months after we landed in Boston, I started out as advance agent and publicity manager on tour with one of Belasco's companies giving a double bill of "Naughty Anthony" and "Madame Butterfly" that took me as far west from New York as Nebraska, and back east to Richmond, Indiana, where the tour was suddenly closed because of "bad business." How it lasted even that long, I fail to understand. Our next stand after Richmond was to be the Cincinnati Opera House, but it was destroyed by fire in the interim, which gave the management a chance to end the tour gracefully. Thereby my brief career with Belasco as a theatrical press agent came to a close. But I was not quite through with him, and before this part of my chronicle is over I shall try to paint a verbal portrait of him.

# 35

## *Return from the West*

DURING MY TRAVELS for Belasco, the longest journey I have ever taken in this country, there is little to record other than the day-by-day sights and sounds that met my eyes and ears as I passed from city to city, always a week ahead of the company, and doing my best to inform prospective theatre-goers of its coming, not necessarily with "the greatest show on earth," but nevertheless with something entertaining. Among the episodes that stick in my mind was the Sunday afternoon in St. Louis, on the eve of my departure for Kansas City, when I received a telegram informing me that the train bearing the company from Columbus, Ohio, was delayed, and that consequently the curtain could not rise on the performance until nine o'clock. My part in this comedy was to go to the railroad station and arrange for the transportation of scenery and baggage to the theatre immediately on the arrival of the belated train. This I did, and the play began an hour late, the audience being compelled to wait with more or less impatience. It may be necessary for me to explain that the theatres in midwestern cities were open seven days in the week, and that Sunday performances were a commonplace there.

One peculiar thing I remember was that upon my return from our furthest west destination, which was Lincoln, Ne-





braska, I had gone through the entire Midwest without visiting either Chicago or Cincinnati, in which cities I have never been. What of it? I am neither richer nor poorer because of that. I stayed in St. Louis an entire week, and that was long enough for me, for it is the smokiest city I have ever been in, with the exception of London. Among the pleasant cities I visited were Rochester, Buffalo, Kansas City, Omaha and Indianapolis. My longest continuous ride was an all-day journey one Sunday from Columbus to St. Louis, through a part of Ohio and across the entire breadth of southern Indiana and Illinois, which in the dead of winter offered me one of the gloomiest series of vistas from a car window that I have ever seen. It was nothing but a wilderness, with only a tiny settlement here and there.

On my return journey from Davenport, Iowa, to Jacksonville, Illinois, I took a train on the C., B. & Q., whence I changed at a small place for another route eastward on the Wabash Railroad. This town was Chapin, and it may have grown up since; but then I could see the whole of it from the station, where I spent three awful hours, my view including nothing more than two or three stores, a few houses, a post office and an opera house! While I was in Davenport, I wanted some cigarettes, and going up to the hotel desk, I was told that they could not be sold under the Iowa state laws, but that I could obtain all I wanted if I went across the bridge over the Mississippi River to Rock Island, Illinois. Such were and such are the absurdities of the American law and laws. The worst was yet to come with the onset of national prohibition!

While in Philadelphia at the opening of the tour, the manager of the company, meeting me casually on the street, stopped me and said that he had a great idea for a stroke of publicity. "I'll invite the Japanese consul to see 'Madame Butterfly,' and decorate the box with his national colors and flags." The next time I saw him I asked what had happened.

"Yes, I saw the Japanese consul," he said, "and what do you suppose, he's a Jew." The manager had overlooked the fact that a consul is simply a business official, and that often he is not a native of the country he represents. One morning in the same city I was caught on the street in a heavy shower, and dodging into Wanamaker's I asked for an umbrella. "Will you take it with you?" inquired the clerk, who happened to be a woman.

After the end of the tour, a further season of twelve weeks with Belasco was given twice a day at Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre in New York, with "Madame Butterfly" as part of the regular vaudeville bill. I had little to do, the major part of my duties being to get the check for the salaries every Saturday morning, to make up the pay roll, and pay off the members of the company at the afternoon performance. Every Friday I went to the offices of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, otherwise known as the Gerry Society, for the application to permit the appearance on the stage of a child under seven, took it at once down to the City Hall, and returned there on Monday to obtain the signature of the mayor, who at that time was the Tammanyite Robert A. Van Wyck. I am still holding some of these signed certificates as souvenirs of that momentous engagement.

Those "child protection" laws frequently resulted in absurdities from the stage point of view. The child in "Madame Butterfly" was supposed to be a baby less than two years old. It could appear at one performance, but if it did not meet the requirements as to age, it could not reappear, and another child must be provided. That was what happened twice, and then with the third child, the daughter of the stage carpenter was pronounced acceptable. To represent a two-year-old baby, we had a child at least seven, and aside from the effect upon the audience, it was a hardship for the actress who represented Madame Butterfly, for she was compelled to carry the "infant" through many of the scenes of the play, and at

one time up a flight of stairs. The role was an arduous one, for the play ran over an hour, and she was compelled to be on the stage all the time except for an interval when she was out of sight of the audience, but even then was unable to return to her dressing room. These experiences of twelve weeks in New York mark the end of my career as a "theatre manager."

# 36

## *A Genius of the Stage*

BEFORE I LEAVE my months with David Belasco, now so long ago, I must say something in reminiscence of that great man of the theatre. In spite of their distance in time and space, these are among the most lingering of all my recollections. I saw and talked with him seldom, for all his business was in charge of his general manager, Benjamin F. Roeder, who represented him in the offices in the Carnegie Music Hall building at the corner of Seventh Avenue and Fifty-seventh Street. Not till some years later did Belasco have a theatre of his own. He pervaded the scene that bore his name, and I saw and heard from him often enough to enlighten me as to the reasons for his fame in the dramatic and theatrical history of his time. He was calm in temperament, seemingly shy and retiring, and he might easily pass as a Catholic priest with his sombre clothing and facial contour. But he was a Jew, a descendant of the branch of his race from Spain and Portugal. He was a native of California, and came east after his early days on the stage in San Francisco and elsewhere along the Pacific coast. William Winter gives a detailed account of these and all his years in a long two-volume biography.

One of Belasco's earliest engagements in New York was at the little Madison Square Theatre, which was not in the

square whose name it bore, but just around the corner in West Twenty-fourth Street. In its early days it was the scene of some of Steele MacKaye's inventive stage exploits, and it was the playhouse in which his famous melodrama of sixty years ago, "Hazel Kirke," had its first production in New York and began its long run of two years. I myself saw it years afterwards at a South End theatre in Boston, and it has been acted hundreds of thousands of times all over the world. I should not be surprised if even now I came across an announcement of its revival somewhere. One day I asked Mr. Belasco if he had devised the double stage at the Madison Square that could be raised and lowered at will, and he replied: "Oh, no, that was Steele MacKaye's!" This once widely heralded invention was ingenious, but it did not prove very practicable, for the time saved between the acts in the shifting of scenery was lost because about the same interval was frequently required for changes in the actors' costumes. Therefore little was gained by having the stage set for the curtain to rise immediately upon an uninterrupted succession of scenes.

It was Belasco's habit always to have somebody with him on his journeyings about the city, or on a trip across the Atlantic, the reason being that he wanted all the annoyances and responsibilities of travel taken off his shoulders. My friend Cook had accompanied him to London for that purpose, and while I was in New York I was drafted into his personal service on a few of his Manhattan excursions. One of them was a call on Blanche Bates at her apartments in West Twenty-third Street not far from Madison Square, where she was living with her mother, Mrs. F. M. Bates, who was a retired actress. Miss Bates was then preparing to star under the Belasco management as Cigarette in a play made by Paul M. Potter, an expert play-maker of that day who not long before had dramatized "Trilby" at the height of the excitement over George Du Maurier's novel. This play was the familiar "Un-

der Two Flags" from Ouida's most celebrated novel. A short time after this meeting, it was produced at the Garden Theatre and proved popular there and elsewhere throughout the country. The interview between Miss Bates and Belasco must have been brief. I left with him, and perhaps we went back to his studio, where I had called for him, or at any rate I left him in good hands, possibly with Mr. Roeder, but certainly not alone.

It will be seen from this rather sketchy account of the visit to Miss Bates that my memory is not as good as it ought to be, even in those days, but what happened was probably of small importance. Of course I should have kept a diary, but I did not, and regrets are futile. I should have kept it for my self-satisfaction, even if I could not foresee its importance in the writing of this autobiography. I recall another evening in New York when I was asked by Mr. Roeder to meet him at the Lambs Club about midnight in order to take a stroll with Mr. Belasco through the streets of that vicinity looking for the site of a theatre, which he had had in mind for some time before he acquired one by lease on West Forty-second Street, and then later had one built for him to his own specifications. It seemed to me a rather vain way to seek a theatre; but Belasco usually knew what he was about, and thereby he gained his ends. I also remember that when I said goodbye to him on the eve of leaving New York for Boston he impressed it upon me that were I ever in need of financial assistance I should apply to him; but I never asked him for help.

Other evenings with him remain to be recorded, for they throw light upon his methods of staging a play. On the Sunday evening before "Madame Butterfly" was put on for its twelve weeks' run at Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre, I was one of an assemblage that went at his request to watch him direct a rehearsal of its scenic and lighting effects. The performances of that play were always preceded by three or four panoramic pictures of Japanese scenes thrown on a screen so

that the audience might presumably be receptive to its oriental atmosphere. Over and over again they were displayed that evening until all of us, except Belasco, grew weary. We drifted out one by one, for it was after midnight; but Belasco remained, how long I do not know, but perhaps until dawn was breaking.

Then, some years later, there was a Monday evening in Boston at the Tremont Theatre when a rehearsal was called, the opening performance of "Adrea," one of his plays written for Mrs. Carter in collaboration with John Luther Long, being delayed so that it might be put into proper shape for its presentation outside of New York, where it had been running for months. Belasco was moving about between the stage and the orchestra seats, saying little, but watching intently all that was going on beyond the footlights. An extremely minor player did not satisfy him either in manner or in voice when he had to rush on as a messenger with only a single sentence to utter. Suddenly, in a fit of justifiable irritation, Belasco leaped upon the stage, rushed to the wings and entered upon the scene, speaking the speech as it should be spoken, and ordering the actor to do as he had done. But did the actor do it? No, indeed, for he was only an obscure actor and doubtless always would be. But David Belasco was David Belasco.

# 37

## *Last Days with Belasco*

OF COURSE Belasco was neither actor nor dramatist in the complete sense of these words, but he was distinctively a supreme man of the theatre. He had acted many parts in his youth; he never acted later. He was essentially a theatrical genius, after the first steps he took in his chosen profession that, beginning in California in boyhood, ended on the heights of his calling some sixty years afterwards in New York. He did not write plays; he rewrote them and made them vital for the stage. To many plays his name is attached, but they are not altogether his. Often the pen that did the greater part of their writing was held in another's hand. But it was his brain that made themactable. The finest play that bears his name is "The Return of Peter Grimm," and whatever there is in it of greatness is his. It is a marvellous and well woven combination of the real with the unreal. Its effect upon an audience is the product of his mind.

Because of these facts the man and his plays hold a high place in the American theatre. They will probably not be revived, but their fame is secure; and no historian of the drama can ignore them. The most prominent of his collaborators was Henry C. De Mille, father of the De Milles of motion picture celebrity. To illustrate and prove the originality and success of his methods, I need merely cite the evi-



dence of an actor who for some years was a member of one and another of Belasco's companies. This actor, with whom I often sat in conversation in his dressing room at Proctor's while he was making up, and with whom I also talked during visits to The Players, that wonderful institution founded by and given to the members of his profession by Edwin Booth, told me that when the company engaged for "Madame Butterfly" gathered for its first rehearsals, there was no prepared manuscript, or prompt book, in existence, and that the actors had for their guidance no typewritten "parts," as the pamphlets containing the lines they are to study are called. The name of this actor, who has long been dead, is Rankin Duval, and he had been on the stage from youth.

Possibly it is not generally known that "Madame Butterfly," so thoroughly have the play and the opera made from it obscured its origin, was at the outset a short story by John Luther Long published first in the Century Magazine. He was a Philadelphian, and a lawyer by profession who, emboldened by the popularity of his first Japanese play, wrote other plays and stories that had a limited measure of success. The play was there in the midst of the scenes and dialogue of "Madame Butterfly," and it was by means of the theatrical ingenuity of Belasco that it achieved its reputation. Much the same method of the building up step by step of a play was doubtless the beginning and the progress of other Belasco plays.

Another of the plays of combined David Belasco and John Luther Long authorship was again on a Japanese theme, "The Darling of the Gods," which was acted for several seasons with Blanche Bates in the leading role of Yo-San. It is a romantic spectacular drama in four acts with a long cast of characters, and it gave opportunity for effective display of oriental stage settings. One evening, as I was sitting in a dressing room in the Tremont Theatre, I had the good fortune to see and talk with several actors who were appearing as its

principal characters. Among them were Robert T. Haines, George Arliss (this was before his starring days), J. Harry Benrimo, Albert Bruning and the aforesaid Rankin Duvall. It was interesting to watch the care with which they made up their exotic characters, and to have Duvall tell me that after he had been drowned in the course of the action of the play, he gave to the audience the illusion of having been dragged out of the water by the application of vaseline to his face. And Benrimo, who appeared bare-legged in a dark scene, made his legs up as carefully as if they were to be in the full glare of the footlights.

It has always seemed strange to me that Puccini did not follow "*Madame Butterfly*" with another opera on a Japanese theme, since he had "*The Darling of the Gods*" ready at hand for musical interpretation. Instead he chose Belasco's American play, "*The Girl of the Golden West*," which was not a very appealing subject for an Italian composer of the calibre of Puccini. It happens that successful operas live longer on the stage than plays, as is evidenced by the fact that "*Madame Butterfly*" the opera is sung many times every season in Europe and America, while "*Madame Butterfly*" the play is well-nigh forgotten. And, except followers of stage history and traditions, whoever thinks of it now as a Belasco production, or of John Luther Long, its original author? The name of Puccini is alone attached to it.

# 38

## *Back to the Transcript*

JUST BEFORE THE END of the run of "Madame Butterfly" in New York, I made arrangements to return to Boston and the Transcript. My work at Proctor's closed on a Saturday evening, and after several enjoyable hours at The Players with friends of the theatre from whom I did not break away until three o'clock in the morning (I am not reluctant to confess this), my wife and I took the ten o'clock train at the Grand Central Station, reaching home (Boston has always been home to us) in the course of Sunday afternoon. At eight o'clock Monday morning I was back at the Transcript, after an absence of almost two years, ready to begin my new work as an assistant editor in the magazine and special feature department. During an interview with the Transcript management for which I had made a special night trip over from New York a few days previous, I was promised the position of literary editor whenever a change might be necessary, with no anticipation that it would come soon. In the meantime I was to do two columns of literary news and comment under the heading of Writers and Books to appear every Wednesday and Saturday. Thenceforth I wrote those columns regularly twice a week for more than thirty-five years, as a part of my activities as literary editor.

My return to the Transcript was in May, 1901, and in No-

vember Charles E. Hurd, who had been literary editor for the preceding twenty-five years, was overtaken by ill fate: a heavy book fell on his foot in the office. After hobbling to work for a few days, he was compelled to remain at home, and I took over his duties—temporarily, as I supposed. But Mr. Hurd never returned, and although he lived for about eight years more, it was to endure sufferings that included not only one amputation of his leg, but a second operation made necessary when the first wound did not heal. Thus the Transcript lost an able literary editor, although he continued for some time to write reviews of books that I sent out to his home in Dorchester regularly.

Just such disasters as his came to more than one of our men. One of the employees in the composition room had the ill luck to be injured in the foot by the fall upon it of one of the heavy metal forms, or chases, and thereby lost his life. The superintendent of the pressroom lost first three fingers of one hand, and later his other hand and arm were drawn between the rollers of the huge press, resulting in their amputation. He lived several years thus crippled, and I understand that he received a pension from the Transcript management the rest of his life. Mr. Hurd, I do know positively, was given his full salary part of the time, and half-pay during the rest of his retirement until the day of his death. The Transcript had a long roll of pensioners for many years, but they were all discontinued prior to my leaving. All that I received at that time was two weeks and two days salary, and I suppose others were treated the same. I had said to myself and to others years before, that when the time came for my end on the Transcript, no pensions would be given. And thus for one time in my life I was a true prophet. The worst for all of us was yet to come. Fortunately the future was sealed from our eyes.

# 39

## *Halcyon Days*

MY DAYS FOR TWO DECADES and more after the dawn of the twentieth century were days of happiness for myself and for all on the Transcript. Everybody was sure of his position and nobody was discharged unless he merited that fate. The range and burden of my work, as was that of others, was extensive. Especially did my duties give to me the satisfaction of diversity. They were not laborious, and if they had been they would have rested lightly on my shoulders. I knew that I had a great responsibility, but I did not worry about it. Mine was not the temperament that impelled me to face my work as though it were a daily struggle, to fuss and fume and complain, as I have known others to do with little or no reason. I was not interfered with, and I gloried in my freedom. The extent of my labors grew with the passing years, and I rejoiced in them, because they grew with the growth of the Transcript in its prosperity. The increasing number of my pages gave me pleasure. At the time of my first advent in 1894, the size of the entire paper rarely exceeded twenty pages, and for a long while the Saturday issue never went over thirty-two pages.

It went on in its uninterrupted growth, until thirty-two or forty pages were not exceptional from Monday through Friday, and it was not astonishing to have a Saturday paper of over sixty pages. We received complaints from readers that

its size was too great, but that was unreasonable, for no one was compelled to read it all from first page to last. The sensible reader could pick and choose what interested him most. Furthermore, it was sometimes difficult to convince outsiders who brought in bits of news, mainly of self-interest, that we were publishing a daily and not a weekly newspaper. "I want this to go in on Saturday," we would be told peremptorily, perhaps on a Wednesday, and the applicant could not understand why we insisted on using it at once, if we used it at all. They wanted it to appear in the Saturday issue because that was the day of largest circulation, and often they would be offended if we refused to grant their request. They thought we were unreasonable when we told them that news on Wednesday had ceased to be news by Saturday.

These difficulties did not affect me personally, however, for my book review pages were in only the Wednesday and Saturday papers. From year to year for a long while I had entire editorial control of two pages on Wednesday, and my Saturday pages increased in number from two or three in the early days and at varying months, to six or seven, and sometimes as many as eight or nine, on Saturday. The largest number I ever had in any one issue was fourteen, on a Wednesday, for one of the four annual issues called "The Christmas Bookstalls," which appeared in the month preceding Christmas and were devoted to the customary reviews, with the addition of lists of books of the year, classified under the successive headings of Juvenile, Fiction, History and Biography, and Miscellaneous. Until 1920, my Saturday pages were a part of the regular sections, and although I had petitioned frequently for an individual and exclusive Book Section, my request was not granted. I felt that if I kept at it long enough, I should eventually win. And I did win.

Suddenly on a Tuesday, or it may have been a Wednesday, Mr. Mandell came to me and said: "Well, at last we're going to have a Book Section every Saturday, and it will begin this

week." I gasped at such short notice, although the news was welcome. I felt like saying, "Why don't you give me more time to get it ready?" but I refrained. My pages had to be arranged for and assembled several days in advance, but I was sensible enough to offer no objection, since I had gained my main point. I bent to my task, and the work was hurriedly done for the quickly advancing Saturday. For a long while, at Mr. Mandell's suggestion, the first page of the Book Section was devoted to a special article by a well known writer, and for it we paid \$50. The reviews and the special departments, such as Writers and Books, the London and Paris literary letters were on the inside pages. The two Wednesday book pages were continued for years as usual, until the spring of 1936. Finally, without consulting anyone, I abandoned the feature articles on the first page of the Book Section, and put leading reviews in their place, since I needed that space for them, and the difficulty of securing articles from famous authors became burdensome. A change was made in the form of the Book Section about 1934 by making it tabloid size, but almost everybody was displeased, and eventually it resumed its normal appearance.

It will possibly be understood by anyone observant of the make-up of a daily newspaper as a whole, or of any of its parts, that its number of pages is determined by the volume of its advertising. In other words, the more advertising the more pages, and the more pages the more advertising. My book review material followed this general rule. The more books published, the more advertisements, and consequently the more reading matter in the Book Section. No amount was too much for me. I always had more books on hand than I could find time to review. The most prolific book review periods of each year were naturally the spring and the pre-Christmas seasons, and the least favorable, although I never was in want of material, were the summer months and a month or so following Christmas.

## *The Transcript Centenary*

AS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY advanced into its teens, the Transcript was riding on the highest waves of prosperity, and the Book Section was at its crest. Then came the depression, as its fourth decade neared, and by it my department was affected with all the others. My pages grew fewer, although I still had too few to accommodate my reviews. Books were still published in plenty, and although the number I received each year decreased from five thousand to four thousand, the decline was scarcely noticeable to our readers. Four thousand books a year is a large number to be published, and there was little if any decrease in my work, or in anybody else's on the paper. We upstairs were not so alive to the downward trends in the financial economy of the Transcript as were the workers in the business department who sat at the seat of customs and noticed the decline of its daily income both for circulation and for advertising, especially for the latter.

A succession of changes in management followed, until the Transcript was no longer in the possession and control of the members of a single family who had descended from its original proprietors. We had in July, 1930, a grand centenary celebration from which it might have been assumed that its affairs were still booming. And in our hearts they



were booming, for there was always hope. The dinner and its accompanying festivities were held in the grand ballroom of the Hotel Statler, where some eight hundred men and women were present, half of whom were Transcript employees, from the basement where the paper was printed and distributed up through all the floors of the business and editorial departments to the composition and stereotype rooms under the roof. Each member of the staff was privileged to invite a guest, and of course we who were married were accompanied by our wives. At a short ceremony during an interval in the dinner we presented the owners of the paper with a bronze tablet on which was an inscription written by a committee consisting of Charles A. Colton of the business office, G. Horace Ellison of the composition department, and myself of the editorial staff. After several consultations we evolved the following, which was surmounted by a representation of an old-fashioned hand printing press, with the dates 1830 and 1930 respectively at the left and right:

This Tablet  
Presented to the Proprietors  
of the  
Boston Evening Transcript  
By its Employees  
Is a Testimonial of Their Love  
and Loyalty  
and Commemorates  
One Hundred Years of Life  
and Achievement  
Under Continuous Family  
Ownership

The purchase of this tablet was financed by small contributions from the four hundred employees of the Transcript, and it was placed on the wall of the countingroom near the entrance door, and is still there despite the fact that the family is not now in possession of the property. A reor-

ganization by court procedure resulted some three years ago in an entirely new ownership which is doing its best to put the paper once more on a substantial foundation.

It might as well be said here that the changes in management, beginning about the middle of the thirties, affected everybody. This could not be otherwise. My combination of reading, writing and editing continued of course, but my space was cramped, the pleasant and happy family atmosphere became clouded by the departure of old members of the staff and the arrival of new ones who were not aware of the history and traditions of an old-time newspaper. Our sphere and freedom of action was restricted and circumscribed. It was not the same Transcript to which we had been accustomed for so many years. Mr. Mandell was gone; Louis M. Hammond, who at first had been our advertising manager and later our treasurer and business manager, was dead after a service of fifty years, and there were too many there who had never heard of either of them.

Other long periods on the Transcript staff covered more than fifty years, the holder of the record being William Durant, our treasurer and business manager, whose life ended after more than six decades of service, during many of which the entire responsibility for the paper rested on his shoulders. Not far behind him was John D. Whitcomb, for a long time the foreman of the composition room, his term, which began in 1848, continuing into fifteen years of the twentieth century. Others who passed the half-century mark were Frank A. Clark of the mailing room, George J. Porter and William A. Moreton of the composition department, William A. Ford, who was long in charge of the personals, the obituaries and the exchanges, and Miss Elizabeth Fullerton and Miss Frances M. Walker of the proof-reading department. Miss Walker survives them all, to her belonging the distinction of having been present at both the fiftieth and the one hundredth anniversary dinners held in 1880 and 1930.

The name of the Transcript was then and is now still at the top of every page, but its typographical appearance has been altered in the effort to bring the paper "up to date," in the not too happy phrase of the day, and attempts have been made to make it the rival of other and far different evening newspapers. It had had a field of its own, and it remains traditionally the Transcript of old, the paper of which Hawthorne had written casually almost one hundred years ago in words that are proverbial: "Towards evening comes the Transcript." Memories of what had made it one of the leading and most influential of all the evening newspapers in the country, in spite of the fact that its circulation had never ascended towards the hundred thousands, still lingered in the minds of us all who were proud that we had been on and were still of the Transcript.

# 41

## *A Bureau of Information*

ONE ASPECT OF LIFE and work on the Transcript not realized by its readers was the absence of countingroom or business office dictation and supervision. We did not suffer from it as did some newspaper men. It is the bane of too many of them. We were never fearful of being reprimanded because something we had written might offend our advertisers or readers, and we had little trouble over threatened suits for libel. In speaking of this of course I can refer only to my own personal experiences, but I know they were shared by my fellow workers. Moreover, the curse of attempted bribery never troubled me. Once in a great while I might receive a letter enclosing a dollar bill, or perhaps one a little larger, with the implication that it was not so much for me personally as it was compensation for a favor granted by the insertion of an item or article in our reading columns. The obvious reply to this was return of the money with the remark that the advertising department was the proper place to approach. And whenever I heard a book review referred to as an advertisement, as sometimes happened, I would take the time to write a letter explaining that book reviews were printed in the Transcript only as a service to and information for our readers.

One of my clearest recollections of this sort of thing (and

I have very few of them to remember) goes back to one late afternoon when my door opened and a stranger entered with a demand, half hesitatingly and half forcefully, for the insertion of an immediate review of a book he held in his hand. I looked at the book, discovered that it was not a new one, and glancing down at my desk saw that he had placed a gold coin there. It took a moment for me to realize what it meant, whereupon I said calmly: "No, indeed, I don't want it, and I can't review the book. It's an old book, and I have not room for it." He made no opposition to my remark, said nothing that I can remember, turned about and left the room, without further explanation or expostulation. Whether he went elsewhere or not, I do not know; but I hope he understood his blunder. I feel quite sure that I am justified in declaring that it is not true, as is sometimes reported, that "every newspaper man has his price."

We at the Transcript were often looked upon as a bureau of information on all subjects, as if we were an institution like a public library. We did try to respond to a sensible question politely, and refrained from showing a reasonable annoyance. Most of these inquiries came by telephone. I have time and again been asked such an absurd question as "Where can I buy such and such a book?" It was a great temptation to reply with an ironic "at a hardware store, of course," but I would restrain myself and answer calmly, "Go to any bookstore," naming two or three of them to be of further help and thus exalt the reputation of the Transcript. A favorite type of inquiry was to identify the source of a quotation, or to satisfy a dispute over spelling. On the very first day of June, early in the morning, a voice on the telephone asked: "Can you tell me who wrote 'Oh, what is so rare as a day in June'?" I gave the answer at once, congratulating myself that it was so easy.

The supposed value of old books brought me many inquiries, by word of mouth and by letter usually. It is a com

mon misapprehension that if a book is old it is therefore valuable. Old editions of the Bible are very common, and it was sad to see the grimace of disappointment with which my answer was received. "There isn't a chance in a thousand that any old Bible, no matter what its age, is worth anything more than its weight as waste paper." Sometimes it was difficult to persuade the inquirer that I knew what I was talking about, and as a last resort I would end with: "Take it to any second-hand bookseller, and see what he'll say." Perhaps some of these owners of an old Bible had seen a report of a sale of a Gutenberg Bible and had taken it for granted that therefore any old Bible was equally valuable.

Among the types of questions to which I was subject, usually by mail, was one of this tenor. "I have heard that a first edition of Hawthorne's novel, 'The Scarlet Letter,' is worth money, especially if it contains a typographical error. I have a copy of that book. Will you tell me how I can find out what it is worth?" I turned over this letter to my friend Herbert Jackson, who is more familiar with the matter than I, and asked if he would explain it to my correspondent. He did so, and this is his report in substance: "I wrote her that the first printing of 'The Scarlet Letter' contained on page 21, line 29, the word 'repudiate' and that after some copies of it had been run off the press it was discovered that that word should be 'reduplicate.' The press was stopped, and the correction was made. Such is the avidity of collectors of first editions that any copy of the first printing containing the misprinted word 'repudiate' will bring more money than the later printing with the right word 'reduplicate.' I stated all this to the inquirer, and I added that if the book was as I have described it and she would send it to me, I would try to sell it for her, and thought I could get a good price for it. She sent the book to me, and here it is."

Whereupon I held out my hand, took the book from him, and it proved to be the cheapest of all the cheap editions of

"The Scarlet Letter," one that probably sold for less than fifty cents in the first place and that would not bring even one cent in its decrepit condition. What was to be done? Nothing, when anyone was so stupid as that. So Jackson returned the book with a brief explanation, and the incident was closed.

Another amusing example of a changed edition has to do with General Lew Wallace's novel of more than fifty years ago, "Ben Hur." It was dedicated in the first instance "To the Wife of My Youth," and at once he began to receive letters of condolence from friends who thought the phrase indicated she was dead. She was not, and General Wallace immediately had the dedication amplified so that it read, "To the Wife of My Youth who Still Abides with Me," thus providing a prize for the collector of first editions who happened to own or to be able to purchase a copy of the first printing. When I read this the first time, I rushed to my fiction bookcase, took down my copy of "Ben Hur," and was disappointed to find it was not an example of the first printing. So another of my dreams of wealth was shattered.

# 42

## *Making Up a Newspaper*

NO LESS IMPORTANT than the hours I spent at my editorial desk were my other hours in the composition room helping in the "make-up" of my pages. That was as necessary to the completeness of my work as everything else I did, although members of the reading public hear little and know less about it. They have heard of typesetters, proof readers, pressmen and printers, but the "make-up man" is a stranger to them. Yet he is one of the most important cogs in the wheels of the machinery of editing and printing. The make-up man: who and what is he, and what does he do? If it were not for him the printing presses would never be able to move. He is the intermediary between the linotype operator and the stereotyper.

The "make-up" of a newspaper may be defined as the arrangement of articles, headlines and pictures when they have been put into type, or mounted on metal blocks after the cuts have been made from photographs or drawings. It was my custom to go up to the composition room at an assigned hour every Tuesday and Friday afternoon to oversee and supervise the assembling of my pages that were to appear as parts of the Wednesday and Saturday issues of the Transcript. Lying on the tables were the forms or metal frames in which the type and other essentials were to be placed. I would stand



at the lower edge of a page form, and the make-up man opposite me would in accordance with my direction put the columns of type and the pictures standing on galleys or shallow trays beside him into the pages, which were not completed until after all of its eight columns were filled. He would lift the type expertly handful by handful, and at last the entire form would be ready to be "planed down," "locked up," and wheeled into the adjacent stereotype room. When the plates had been cast—a process too complicated to be explained here—they were sent down by freight elevator to the pressroom in the basement and placed in the right order on the press so that the completed paper would emerge at lightning speed printed and folded.

I emphasize all this so particularly, which is a small though an important item in the entire process of getting out a newspaper, in order to show how close a connection there is between its editorial and mechanical elements. "Co-operation" is the watchword throughout a newspaper plant. As I look back over my more than forty years at the Transcript, I cannot forget the many hours I spent with my associates in the composition room. I wish I might mention them all by name, both the departed and those who are still there. I call all of them my personal friends as well as my professional associates. On the other hand, it is astonishing to recall that in my long service I visited the pressroom not more than once a year, if as often.

The reason for this is that my individual work on any one daily issue of the paper ended when the make-up process ended. Thereafter I merely had to wait until the office boy brought the completed paper to my room soon after the presses began to hum. In the meantime I had begun or was continuing my labors on the next issue in which my department appeared, either Wednesday or Saturday. For some two years near the close of my Transcript life, I wrote a column review that appeared daily, but the only work it entailed in

addition to its writing was the reading and correction of the proof. The make-up man did his share all by himself, unless it was necessary to call me upstairs to cut out a few lines so that the review would fit into the space allotted to it.

So my work went on day after day, week after week, and year after year. It was by no means monotonous, for there was diversity in it, and although I was always at my desk in the same place, the scene was constantly changing and opening up to me a vista of continuous life and the world. I was physically in Boston, but I was mentally everywhere else.

# 43

## *My Desk and I*

THAT DESK OF MINE! It was with me so long that it seems to have a personality all its own which it shared with a large typewriter desk that stood beside it for years that must have numbered more than twenty. It had been with me almost from the beginning of my working life. I inherited it from Mr. Hurd when I succeeded him upon his retirement, but I had first made its acquaintance before that day. It was mine when I was with Henry B. Humphrey in his advertising agency before I went to Harvard and during my college vacations. At the moment I became literary editor, I went back to it, and through all my removals from one Transcript room to another, and even when I went up a flight of stairs into the Milk Street building, I followed it and it followed me.

More than fifty years my desk and I had been boon companions, and I wanted none other. It was an old desk when it became mine the first time, and when we parted company in 1938 it had become a veritable antique, worth nothing in the market of course, but worth a great deal in my mind. It was a massive piece of furniture, a relic of a vanished era of desk-making, but all the choicer to me on that account. It was built of the red-stained cherry wood once so popular, with drawers to the floor on both sides and a flat writing surface that had once been covered with dark green felt cloth

which grew steadily shabbier and shabbier as the years went by. At the back under its roll top were plenty of pigeonholes and small drawers, with a recess in the centre for ink and pens and pencils and whatever else I cared to clutter it with. There was scarcely an empty square inch of it anywhere, for what was the use of having so large a desk if I failed to avail myself of its resources?

In the accurate sense of the word, it was not a safe desk if I had anything valuable in it, for the lock had become decrepit and the key had gone the way of all keys. The roll top itself would go up and down, but with some reluctance, and the latest repairs on it were doubtless the last. The front edge that faced my chair and me showed the ravages of time unashamedly, for it was as full of curves as is the ocean shore when the tides are out, and its charred and bruised surface spoke eloquently of my smoking of many thousands of cigarettes as I sat there at my work. Toward the chair I have no sentiment or regret, for although it was at least a quarter-century old, it was a youngster compared with the desk.

It was cruel of me to leave my desk to its fate in that room, but what could I do? I could not take it with me, since I had no room for it in my home, and if I had attempted to have it removed, it would undoubtedly have suffered as the historic one hoss shay suffered. What has happened to it, I do not know; but it has probably gone the way of all good old desks that are no longer wanted in this ungrateful world. The most that I can do in honor of its long and faithful service is to pay to it this tribute of respect and grateful words.

# 44

## *Enter Christopher Morley*

I HAVE KNOWN Christopher Morley ever since he came to Boston for a temporary stay shortly after his return to this country from his studies as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. By the way, it is quite remarkable that the three Morley brothers, Frank, Felix and Christopher, were all Rhodes Scholars; and I must add to this that their father was a distinguished professor of mathematics successively in Haverford College and Johns Hopkins University. Christopher and I became friends from the moment when he looked in on me one day in 1915 as I was sitting at my Transcript desk. That is twenty-five years ago, when he was twenty-five, and I have watched his advancing career always, glad to recall that I knew him at its beginning.

Not long after his first call he came in one morning all astir over a scene he had witnessed in the window of the now abandoned Houghton & Dutton department store at the corner of Tremont and Beacon streets. A dairy was in operation there and could be seen by anyone who walked down the Beacon Street slope just before reaching Tremont Street. One of its most inviting features for the purpose of advertisement was a group of young women in the midst of butter-making—in other words, it was a miniature rural Arcadia in the heart of a great city. What caught his eye especially was a

churn such as might be seen in any New England farmhouse, or possibly on the stage of a theatre where a performance of the once familiar "Robin Hood" was in progress. In his hand was a piece of paper, and on it were these words:

## HYMN

TO THE DAIRYMAIDS ON BEACON STREET

Sweetly solemn see them stand,  
Spinning churns on either hand,  
Neatly capped and aproned white  
Airy fairy dairy sight.  
Jersey priestesses they seem,  
Miracling milk to cream.

Cream solidifies to cheese  
By Pasteural mysteries,  
And they give, within their shrine,  
Their communion in kine.

Incantations pure they mutter  
O'er the golden minted butter  
And (no layman hand can pen it)  
See them gloat above their rennet!

By that hillside window pane  
Rugged teamsters draw the rein.  
Doff the battered hat and bow  
To these acolytes of cow.

Genuflect, ye passersby!  
Muse upon their ritual high—  
Milk to cream, yea, cream to cheese  
White lacteal mysteries.

Let adorers sing the word  
Of the smoothly flowing curd,  
Yea, we sing with bells and fife,  
This is the whey, this is the life!

"Will you use this?" he asked, in those words, or something like them. After a moment's glance, I responded, "Of course I will," and the verses appeared in the Transcript a day or two later; to be exact, on Saturday February 13, 1915, forming a Morley first edition that will be highly prized by any collector who is lucky enough to acquire it. So clever is it that its two awful puns will readily be forgiven. It is truly prophetic of the Morley to come.

Once in a while, when Morley came over to Boston, he would drop in to see me, or telephone me; but as a rule our acquaintance has been by way of the mail in letters and memoranda that would make an interesting book by itself. Everything was grist that came to his mill. While he was in Philadelphia on the staff of the Ladies' Home Journal, he discovered and clipped from the Transcript a news story bearing this headline: "New R. L. S. Committee." The first words under it were "Roxbury Latin School." The "R. L. S." in both, he had underscored with red pencil and in the margin were written the words, also in red: "O Hell!" Accompanying the clipping was this letter:

DEAR MR. EDGETT:

Two RLS fans protest indignantly at the cruel and unmerited disappointment caused them by the attached headline in a recent Transcript. What right has the Roxbury Latin School to use that sacrosanct triad of initials?

Respectfully yours,

FRANKLIN B. WILEY  
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Wiley, by the way, was an old associate of mine on the Transcript who had left us some years before to go to Philadelphia to join the Curtis forces.

Another Morley relic in my possession is a card with a drawing of a lobster on it, with the printed words "Edgett's, Broadway at 69th Street." Accompanying it, on New York

Evening Post stationery, with which paper he was then associated, he had written with pen and ink these words: "Have you gone into the Lobster traffick? Yours, Christopher Morley."

It may be remembered that, in partnership with other enthusiasts of the theatre, Morley ran a playhouse across the Hudson in Hoboken for a while, and that under their management several antiquated plays were produced, among them the notorious display of the feminine form of the sixties known as "The Black Crook," which had then been all the rage in New York and elsewhere. To its opening at Niblo's Garden, on September 25, 1866, and its subsequent run of 475 performances, Professor George C. D. Odell in the eighth volume of his "Annals of the New York Stage" gives four pages, with photographic portraits of its participants, remarking that "the spectacle remains in popular consciousness as the first attempt to put on the stage the wild delirious joy of a sensualist's fancy."

This revived production of "The Black Crook" was sent on the road under the Morley management, and its arrival in Boston was heralded by an advance agent, a young woman who brought me a letter of introduction from Christopher written in pencil on the back of a mimeographed restaurant menu, and running thus:

DEAR EDWIN—

Please be nice to Miss — who is our evangeliste for The Black Crook!

C. D. M.

My niceness consisted, among other things, in lending her material of which I have no doubt she made good use in the newspapers, but it was with fear and trembling that I gave into her hands a large one-volume illustrated history of the Boston Theatre, the famous old playhouse that stood ever since 1854 on Washington Street until its destruction about



ten years ago to make way for a modern motion picture palace. My faith in her and in Christopher Morley was justified, for she returned the book promptly, and it is now safe behind glass doors on one of my library shelves. I am sorry to say that other book borrowers have not been so thoughtful, a fact of which I am reminded by the gaps among my books.

Naturally, since "The Black Crook" was a stage spectacle that I had heard much about ever since the beginning of my stage-going days, I thought it necessary to see it, and I therefore took my friend Jackson with me to the old Keith's Theatre, where it was booked in Boston. It was decidedly worth seeing as an interesting and quaint antiquity of the American stage, and it proved to be a real "show," and even more of a burlesque than it was in its original version when it was arousing the condemnation and moral opposition of the nineteenth century theatrical censors. But its immorality had evaporated, and it was really very mild stuff indeed, especially by contrast with the sights we now see both in plays and in motion pictures. Soon after this excursion of "The Black Crook" from the wilds of Hoboken, Morley seceded from the theatrical business, a wiser but I scarcely think a sadder man. I doubt, however, if he will ever become again a theatre manager, or a reproducer of old plays. He has written a number of plays, at any rate, and one of them, entitled "Pleased to Meet You: An International Hilarity in Three Acts," was the opening attraction at the third season of the Repertory Theatre of Boston.

His brief and sportive letters helped to make the day a joyful prospect to me as a sequel to the opening of my morning mail. What I had written to or about him that drew forth this letter, I fail to remember, but it is typical of many as it came to me on a Saturday Review of Literature letterhead:

DEAR E. F. E.:—

You are a rogue! You know perfectly well I did not say *all*

metaphors are vulgar; I said that all the best metaphors were vulgar. Blessings anyhow and my affectionate homages, genuflexions and table tappings.

Your pupil and friend,

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY.

In my collection of Christopher Morley letters is one in which I take great pride, especially as it is all written in his own hand from his home, and justifies me in thinking that I have been of some help to my fellow man. It is dated from

GREEN ESCAPE, ROSLYN HEIGHTS, NEW YORK

May 21, 1926

DEAR MR. EDGETT—

Cleaning up a mass of papers before going on a vacation, I came upon many old clippings of little odds and ends of things that I contributed to the Transcript. And I want you to know that I have not forgotten, and shall not forget, your kindness to me in those prentice days; when the Transcript's small checks meant to me a tremendous great deal—not merely as money but as encouragement. You reached then a position in my heart never quite attained by any other editor—the only Editor Who Never Turned Me Down. I think of you with gratitude and affection and it just struck me that I ought to tell you I have not forgotten.

Yours indeed

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

To have been associated with Christopher Morley at the beginning of his career is one of my liveliest memories. Editorial positions on the Ladies' Home Journal, the Philadelphia Evening Ledger, the New York Evening Post, and the Saturday Review of Literature, with his work as contributor to their columns, have kept him busy ever since his return from Oxford. But the American public knows him best as the author of "Parnassus on Wheels," "The Haunted Bookshop," "Where the Blue Begins," "Thunder on the Left," "Kitty Foyle," and his many delightful little books of verse and prose bearing the attractive titles of "Mince Pie,"

“Shandygaff,” “Religio Journalistici,” and “Plum Pudding,” all truly Morleyan. In one of these he quizzically refers to the old-fashioned wire-rope elevator—now a relic of the past—that brought him up to my room on the fifth floor of the Transcript’s Milk Street building. In one of these books of miscellany of his he calls me “gentle-hearted,” but I know not why.

Anyone who is seeking to read the Morley of the early post-Oxford days will find him here and there in the old files of the Transcript of 1916, 1917, and thereabouts, but they are signed not with his name, but with his initials, C. D. M., which is short for Christopher Darlington Morley, and which because of its length you will not blame him for curtailing. As a master of the gentle art of pleasantry and the romantic he is not excelled, and in conversation he is as ready with his tongue as he is with his pen or typewriter in his making of books.

# 45

## *Actors and Editors*

THERE ARE MANY and varied interludes in this story, and I might as well bring some of them into it now, although the events they chronicle took place here and there throughout almost the entire length of my Transcript life of nearly half a century. It is customary for newspaper editors and reporters, with the approval of their employers, to amplify their salaries by engaging in outside work, especially as publicity writers—or press agents, as they are customarily designated—for theatres and other amusement enterprises. Through my connection with David Belasco, I was well qualified to do that extra writing, which on successive occasions came from various sources, almost without my seeking it. At odd times I acted as the Boston representative of Mr. Belasco and James K. Hackett, my duties being to send out to the Boston newspapers information about their activities, and to give assistance to their touring managers when their companies came for short stays there.

The greater and longer part of this service, however, had to do with local theatres, each of which had its own press agent. The first of these engagements lasted only a few months, and was with Corse Payton, an actor and manager who thought he would be able to establish one of his stock companies in Boston. That project failed within a few

months, and thereafter I was successively engaged with Winthrop Ames, Lorin F. Deland and John Craig in their management of the Castle Square Theatre, and with Henry Jewett at the Copley and Repertory theatres. All this work was easy and congenial, and I had practically no trouble in obtaining all the information about plays and players essential to my purposes, whether I was representing a New York or a local manager. It was mine for the asking, and usually without the asking.

In addition to all this, I wrote magazine articles and occasional material on a variety of themes for other publications than the Transcript. I did several special articles on actors, including Mrs. Fiske, Maxine Elliott and William H. Crane as long ago as 1902 and 1903 for Leslie's Monthly when it was under the editorship of Ellery Sedgwick prior to his long and highly successful career as head of the Atlantic Monthly. What lingers most closely in my memory about this is the fact that I received from him the highest rate of space payment that it was ever my good fortune to obtain from any source before or after. A long historical and critical account of American literature for the Encyclopedia Americana was another piece of writing I did, and for it I received a set of that work which I sold to a Boston bookstore for \$40.00. That was not very good in view of the time I spent over it.

For the ten years between 1908 and 1917 I wrote short editorials weekly for the Boston Budget, and I have them all, not pasted in a scrapbook, but safely preserved in a drawer as I tore the pages containing them from the paper every Monday. During all that long time I regularly received my weekly check in the first mail Monday morning, with only one lapse, and that because the United States Post Office Department had missent it. Once a year for six years I announced the annual coming of Sousa and His Band to Boston, and found the manager, Harry Askin, one of the pleasantest men I ever had business dealings with, especially when

he saw to it faithfully that a bottle of Scotch whiskey did not fail to reach me whenever he came over from New York. Other incidental publicity tasks came my way, two of which I recall as press-agent work for a Boston singing teacher, and as herald for an actor friend who put on amateur performances of plays for the sake of bringing his pupils before the public. He was Howell Hansel, at one time leading man of the Castle Square Stock Company. It is his fate to be now with the great majority.

The most important of my local theatre activities while I was the Transcript's literary editor extended over the long period of twenty-five years when I was doing the publicity work for the Castle Square, the Copley and the Repertory theatres. Both John Craig and Henry Jewett were steadily conspicuous in the theatre world of Boston, and few there were among the residents of Boston and its suburbs who did not see them and their companies at their playhouses. That was the heyday of the popular-priced two-a-day local companies that sometimes were before the public the year round without taking a summer vacation. The play was changed every week, afternoon and evening performances were given daily all over the country, and thousands of dramas and comedies were acted that theatre-goers could not possibly otherwise have seen. Multitudes of patrons were regular weekly attendants and subscribed for the same seats through the entire season. The plays presented were usually those that had survived their appeal after they had been acted by the famous stars and travelling companies. Occasionally productions of new plays were given, and by both Mr. Craig and Mr. Jewett there were excursions into a Shakspearean repertory.

After several seasons at the Castle Square as leading man, Mr. Craig leased that house in 1908, and managed it for almost ten years with at first a triumphant popularity that slowly diminished. For the greater part of the time he and

his wife, Mary Young, acted the most important roles, both being great favorites with the Boston public, and even now, a long time after their departure, I feel sure they are not forgotten. Mr. Craig died a few years ago, and Miss Young makes infrequent ventures into management and motion pictures.

# 46

## *Years at the Castle Square*

ALL THIS WORK left me little spare time except for evening reading at home, but it in no wise interfered with my duties in the Transcript editorial rooms.

Perhaps I should explain the duties of a local theatre press agent. He communicated through the newspapers information about what was going on in the theatre with which he was connected, he prepared the advertisements day by day and week by week for the daily newspapers, he wrote and edited the programs, which for both the Craig and the Jewett theatres were by no means the conventional bills of the play common in most theatres, filled with nothing but the casts of characters, announcements for the coming weeks, and a medley of advertisements. Instead these programs contained special material, the greater part of which I wrote, that made them important enough to take home for reading and for preservation. These programs of my past are certainly valuable to me, many years later, for I have separate volumes of them bound annually to the number of twenty-one. They extend through the years from 1905 to 1930, and they enable me to look up anything readily that may aid me in my theatrical retrospect. They fill an entire long shelf in that section of my library devoted to the stage.

The press agent would also meet in frequent conference



with the management, he would interview members of the company in order to obtain news for the papers and articles for the program, and he did everything he could to keep his theatres fresh in the public mind.

My first years at the Castle Square Theatre began in September, 1905, when it was under the direction of Lorin F. Deland and Winthrop Ames, the first an advertising expert who in his younger days had had visions of becoming an actor, although he renounced them eventually to enter the paths of business. He was the husband of Margaret Deland, the novelist. Winthrop Ames was a member of the wealthy family that had long prospered in Massachusetts business and politics, and he continued to be a man of the theatre from his Harvard days to his death a few years ago. The artistic aspects of the theatre appealed especially to him, and as a possessor of a portion of the Ames fortune he was able to gratify those inclinations to the top of his bent, even to the building of new theatres. Apparently he had no aspirations towards becoming an actor. He was content to stand away from the footlights as they shine in public, and to hold in his hands the directing reins behind the scenes.

Mr. Ames's first experience after the collapse of the Castle Square project was to go over to New York to become head of the New Theatre that was a failure almost before it opened. At one time he had had the idea of erecting and managing a theatre in Boston on a site in Park Square, but he gave that up. After he became a New Yorker, the theatre and everything pertaining to it was his principal ambition, and he went on thereafter in the paths he had blazed for himself on his way to the heights of the profession. He ventured into revivals of some of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. He did not a little to carry on and sustain the demand for those immortal examples of humor and music, and he made a lasting name in the history of the American theatre.

Mention of the names of that amazing pair who seem

destined to live forever, with "The Mikado," "Pinafore" and all the rest still filling the theatre with audiences that find them as timely and as amusing as they were more than a half-century ago arouses in my mind a pertinent question. Would not the reputation of Victor Herbert be greater and more lasting if he had had for a librettist a humorist of the calibre of Gilbert? Certain it is that Gilbert was essential to Sullivan and that Sullivan was essential to Gilbert. They were an unmatchable team, and Victor Herbert needed a comparable mate, and there was none available to furnish him with such a libretto as was Gilbert's for Sullivan.

The Deland and Ames seasons at the Castle Square gave them the chance that seems to be the aim of almost every manager—whether or not he be also an actor; and that is the production of some of Shakspeare's plays. They are all willing to take the financial risk for the sake of the potential glory. These Castle Square Shakspearean productions included special inducements in the way of artistically designed stage settings by Frank Chouteau Brown, a well known Boston architect who was highly praised for his technical skill, while at the same time school and college students were offered matinee seats at a schedule of lowered prices. They were largely attended and commended for their acting and illusory stage equipment.

# 47

## *Actors and Their Ways*

FOR SOME YEARS during this period I had the pleasure of acquaintance with William Charles Masson, who had come over from Australia in his youth and remained in this country the rest of his life. He drifted here and there from season to season, after the fashion of many actors, and he was also a practical and clever stage manager who knew all the tricks of that trade. I would receive many letters from him from theatres and cities innumerable after he left the Castle Square, for he never seemed to lack engagements as an expert member of this, that and the other stock company. The last time I saw him either on or off the stage was when he came to Boston and played a minor part in the production of "Merry Wives of Windsor" in which Mrs. Fiske, Henrietta Crosman and Otis Skinner were a trio of celebrated stars.

My friend Masson was a capable actor who played many parts, but he was as much an actor off the stage, and also a fellow of infinite jest. He was often disconcerting in his conversation, for he was so much of a joker that it was impossible to know whether or not to take him seriously. At one time he was house manager of the Castle Square during two successful summer seasons of opera under the Deland and Ames direction; but they came to disaster in their attempts

to substitute grand opera for drama when the autumn came. This grand opera was an expensive proposition, for they were obliged to have practically a double company of principals, with the added expense of a chorus and auxiliaries. Soon thereafter came the beginning of John Craig's long regime as actor-manager of that theatre.

To speak of comic opera carries my mind back to the summer of 1910 into the midst of a sad enterprise in which with two partners I started out to win our joint fortunes in theatre management. This partner was my good friend George E. Clark, who was then the Castle Square treasurer, and we had as a third member of the corporation (we were really incorporated) Ben Craig of John Craig's stage staff. We subleased the theatre from Mr. Craig for the summer interim between the two regular seasons, spent six months in engaging a company and other necessary preparations, and opened on Monday evening June 20, 1910, with a production of "The Mikado." On Saturday evening of the next week, after we had given Planquette's comic opera "Rip Van Winkle," the season came to a disastrous end.

Confession is good for the soul, and I know that George Clark will join me in saying that the project was a ghastly failure, and that it was foredoomed in such inexperienced hands as ours. We grit our teeth and grinned, and bore with equanimity our joint loss of \$3,000. I don't believe either of us had ever spent so much money in so short a time. But we had the satisfaction of retiring gracefully, of paying all our debts, and of knowing that the only man who came out of the affair with full pockets was John Craig, to whom we paid the two weeks' rent of \$500 due him. George and I do not see each other as often as we should like to, but he is still in Boston, having transferred his allegiance from theatre to hotel management, of course with justice and credit to himself. For my last two years and a half I had the pleasure of having for my very efficient secretary his daughter Mar-

garet, whom I have known from her babyhood, and now she is still on the Transcript, where I visit her once in a while. That I may not be accused of overlooking them—how could I overlook them, since I saw them and worked with them each during her term of service, I must set down the names of my three other secretaries—Mary E. A. Barker, Mildred F. Brown and Olive S. Bucknell. Together, one after another, with Miss Barker serving the longest of them all, they were with me almost forty years.

*Two Actor Managers*

THE ACTOR TURNED MANAGER was sometimes lacking in practical business sense, especially in the preparation of advertisements. Neither Mr. Craig nor Mr. Jewett was able to understand the technique of space in newspaper columns. Advertising in metropolitan newspapers is paid for at the rate of so much a line of measured agate type, and when they estimated the cost of a certain-sized advertisement they begrudged every line of it that was not occupied by words. It is an extremely sensible rule in newspaper advertising that white paper is as much worth paying for as the blackness of words and sentences. But whenever I took the proof of a projected advertisement to either of them, each would insist upon filling in the ends of lines and the corners with more printed matter.

Sometimes they had their way, when I saw that it would be a waste of time to argue, but I was occasionally able to get the better of them, and thereby make the advertisement more effective in its display, and stronger in its "pulling power," as the advertising man's lingo has it. My favorite reminiscence of Mr. Craig in this respect is that I could not make him understand why it was impossible to get the long name of a play such as "The Taming of the Shrew" in the same-size type in the same relative space as "Hamlet." The

amenities of the daily life of a press agent sometimes added to his joy of living.

I think I never had anything to do with any two men of the theatre so diametrically different as were John Craig and Henry Jewett. Physically and temperamentally they were utterly unlike. Mr. Craig was lithe in physique and quick in movement. Mr. Jewett was large and heavy, but by no means stolid. Both were alert mentally, and both were excellent actors of wide national as well as of local Boston reputation. They were personally acquainted, of course, but as far as I know they never encountered each other as actors in the same play. They both made Boston a home for long periods, and their lasting reputation belongs to that city. Mr. Craig was the first to come to Boston, and Mr. Jewett the last to remain there, and their names are prominent in Boston stage affairs for over thirty years. There were few days in that long time when the name of the one or the other did not appear in theatre advertisements or in the news columns of the papers. They were on the Boston stage before the advent of the motion picture; they were also on it after the motion picture had reached its high popularity.

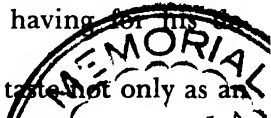
Neither was Boston-born. Let me present Mr. Craig first. He went in his boyhood from Tennessee, his birth state, to Texas. I remember asking him, having seen his name sometimes on programs as John D. Craig and sometimes as John R. Craig, if one of these was a typographical error. "No," he answered, "my middle name was really Dickey, which was the surname of a friend of my father, but it seemed so like a nickname that I changed it to Richard, and finally dropped the middle name or its initial altogether, and became plain John Craig." Coming north to New York he was leading man in a succession of companies, at one time acting important roles with Augustin Daly and Mrs. Fiske. Before I knew him personally, I remember seeing him as Orsino in "Twelfth Night" with Ada Rehan as Viola, and as Angel

Clare with Mrs. Fiske in the dramatization of Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

My mind is filled with memories of those years during which there was scarcely a day when John Craig and I did not see and talk with each other, and I have the happiest recollections of his acting of a diversity of characters in hundreds of plays of all kinds from tragedy to musical comedy during his ten seasons at the head of the Castle Square Theatre. They were casual incidents in my daily life then; as I look back towards them now they have grown in their importance. His range extended from Othello to Sinbad the Sailor in "Jack and the Beanstalk," which was one of his most successful presentations. Although he acted that insignificant role with a zest that went over the footlights, he told me that it seemed to be nothing more than nonsense to him; yet he and his company, including Mary Young as Jack, filled the theatre during its run of five weeks every afternoon and evening of the Christmas and New Year's season.

As for his Othello, I asked him when he was playing to capacity audiences, "Why not go on with it for another week, instead of changing the bill to a less important play?" but his answer was emphatic: "No, it is a great tragedy and a great character, but it gets on my nerves to be compelled to murder Desdemona twice a day." This was no jest, but an instance of the seriousness with which he sometimes took his work as an actor. And as almost everybody knew, Mary Young, who was acting Desdemona, was his wife. Here is an actor's unintentional contribution to the eternal argument as to whether he should really feel the emotions of the characters he was acting. "Othello" was merely one of his Shakespearean productions, for his repertory included both tragedies and comedies, and like Deland and Ames he made a specialty of artistic scenic productions, having for his designer the well known Livingston Platt.

Another evidence of Mr. Craig's good taste not only as an





actor but as a manager is shown by his willingness to change his mind after having announced his decision to produce a play that he later discovered was unfit for his audiences. He had advertised in his program a revival of Charles Hoyt's popular farce-comedy, "A Trip to Chinatown," and when I asked him when he was going to put it on, he said: "Never. I've just looked through the script, and it is so full of outrageous horseplay that I've decided not to do it. I won't act in it myself, I'm not going to ask my company to either, and I don't want to insult the intelligence of my audiences with it." As a matter of fact, it was one of the worst of Hoyt's absurd comedies. Sometimes as I remember all this and much else, I wonder if I should really be better off in the way of reminiscent anecdotes if I had kept a diary.

# 49

## *John Craig and His Staff*

ALTHOUGH MR. CRAIG had a stage director to prepare his plays for their production for afternoon and evening performances, which required rehearsals every morning and frequently all day Sunday of the play scheduled for the week to come, he usually had a great deal to say himself at those times. It is marvellous that the mind of man or woman could every week study, retain and then finally cast aside the lines the playwright had set down for them. Mr. Craig was not what is known in theatrical parlance as a "good study." With all the details of the management of the theatre to look after, it is a wonder that he could ever concentrate on learning any part, or upon it when the time came for the curtain to rise on its performance. The parts he played were almost always the longest of them all, sometimes extending to fifty or seventy-five "sides," as the pages of an actor's manuscript are called. But he was clever at getting through a play by "faking" his lines, although the substitution of words or phrases for those he was supposed to repeat was disconcerting to the members of the cast who were doing their best to respond to their cues. They would not receive the right words wherefrom to follow him, and especially on Monday afternoons and evenings, the performances were often short of perfection, and an occasional humor not intended by the dramatist or the actors attended their scenes.

One friend of many years—now there are nearly thirty-five of them—whom I first knew at the Castle Square is Phillip H. Lavine, who served Mr. Craig ably and faithfully as his right-hand man both on and off the stage. He tells many good stories about his hours when with prompt-book in hand he was trying to keep his employer on the strait and narrow path of his role. He was not the official prompter, but when Mr. Craig wanted efficient aid he placed so great reliance upon Phillip's carefulness that he was drafted to hold the book. If there were a fireplace as a part of the stage settings, he would place himself within its depths in order to be as close as possible to the actor, who often would edge over to that side of the stage so as not to miss the whispers aimed at his ear. Any odd corner out of the vision of the audience would serve its purpose. Since the Castle Square was equipped with one of the old-fashioned prompters' hoods placed in the centre of the stage just behind the foot-lights, especially for opera, it was requisitioned now and then, with Phillip Lavine within its stifling confines holding the book on Mr. Craig.

Years later I was to have Phillip's son Sigmund, then only a baby, as one of the most useful and important reviewers on my Transcript staff. His first and only appearance on the stage as an actor is set down in a Castle Square program of "The Heir to the Hoorah," dated the week of December 14, 1908, as "The Baby, by Himself." Instead of becoming an actor, towards which I think he once looked ambitiously, Sigmund entered the profession of teaching, and after a two years experience that stood him in good stead at a government Indian school in North Dakota, he is now married and living in suburban Boston while he is a member of the teaching staff of a public school. Sigmund's sister Phoebe later had a brief career as an actress in local stock companies, but after a while she renounced her stage ambition for the felicities of married life. And these two children's mother,

it must be added to complete the family record, has no idle moments all the year round, for in addition to her household cares she manages a summer camp for girls on the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire, and during the rest of the year keeps herself from idleness by running a kindergarten school for very little children.

The stage hands, too, were helpful to Mr. Craig. One morning I happened to be in his office while he was eating his breakfast from a tray on his desk. It had been sent in from the hotel, and he was enjoying himself at a time near noon that is usually the actor's breakfast hour, when Tommy O'Brien, the property man, entered and said: "Good morning, Governor, what shall I give you to eat at the performance this afternoon?" The play was "Are You a Mason?" in which there is a scene where the hero is sitting alone at the table. "Oh, cut up some apples, Tommy," was the reply, "but be sure to wash your hands first." This salutation of "Governor" was the customary way of addressing Mr. Craig, and is common in many theatres.

# 50

## *Actors and Stage Managers*

DURING ONE of his later seasons, Mr. Craig was preparing to stage Hall Caine's play, "The Christian"; but instead of attending the rehearsals he went over to New York, and on his return Friday he had not learned a line of his part of John Storm. Valiantly he was about to set to work, when miraculously there came a telephone message from an unknown voice at the other end of the line: "This is Derwent Hall Caine, son of the author of 'The Christian.' Don't you want me to act John Storm for you? I have acted it many times, and I can come over at once from New York." Without the slightest hesitation, Mr. Craig seized the chance to lessen his labors. "Yes, come over immediately," he said. That was, I think, Saturday, and he arrived the next morning; but on his arrival it was discovered that young Mr. Caine's text of the play was different from the prompt book the Castle Square company had been studying. They managed to rush through a final rehearsal, and it is doubtful if anyone in the audience at the opening Monday matinee noticed that anything was wrong. Actors have a clever way with themselves in such circumstances. Similar incidents to this were not uncommon with a twice-a-day stock company that was always prepared for the worst and therefore was equal to overcoming all obstacles.

From the Castle Square stage rose a number of actors who without doubt profited by their experience and training through their exacting duties there. Perhaps the most conspicuous among them is Alfred Lunt, who as a very young man began his climb under Mr. Craig's direction, tutelage and encouragement after leaving Harvard. In spite of his youth he was frequently condemned to hide his identity not very successfully in old men's parts, and he may often have felt embarrassed by his weak simulation of the decrepitude of voice and bearing he was forced to adopt. But perhaps that was good for him, piloting him along the difficult road to his higher achievement. Then he went elsewhere, and finally found himself with his wife, Lynn Fontanne, a leading light of the Theatre Guild productions.

Another of Mr. Craig's capable and active young men was Donald Meek, now playing conspicuous comedy characters in motion pictures; George Hassell, who died in the midst of an auspiciously rising advance on the screen; and Frances Starr, who after a short engagement with Mr. Craig rose to stellar flights as one of the successors of Mrs. Leslie Carter in the roster of David Belasco's heroines. W. P. Carleton, who became Mr. Craig's leading man when he himself became weary of the dual role of manager and actor; William Charles Masson and Charles Bickford, whose forte on the screen is the acting of rough and tough personages, all came forth from the Castle Square stock company.

During his years as head of the Castle Square, Mr. Craig had a succession of stage managers. Perhaps I should explain that the stage manager, especially of a stock company, is the man who adds usually to his duties as an actor the task of helping to direct the rehearsals under the authority of the actor manager, who has charge of the performances, and with the aid of his assistants rings the curtain up and down on each act. In fact, he is responsible for everything that happens beyond the footlights. If anything goes wrong he receives the

blame, and when everything goes right praise for him is scanty.

One of Mr. Craig's stage managers for several seasons was William Parke, who had had experience in that capacity when he was with Richard Mansfield and other stars. In a reminiscent mood one day he told me that when Mansfield was preparing Ibsen's poetic play, "Peer Gynt," for production, they came to the line, "All that I see I see awry," the last word of which was pronounced by the actor "aw-ry," as if the first syllable were the English sound "aw." Mr. Parke was emboldened to tell Mansfield that that was wrong, but the star would not admit his error except in so far as to substitute another word for it. Later, in telling this story to E. E. Clive of Mr. Jewett's company, I was amazed by his reply: "Why, that's the way I pronounce it." I have looked up the word in two leading English (compiled and published in England, I mean) dictionaries and there is no authority there for Mansfield's or Clive's dictum. I find the word, but not the phrase as it was quoted to me by Mr. Parke, in William Archer's translation of "Peer Gynt"; but it is possible that Mansfield used some other English version.

# 51

## *Henry Jewett at the Copley Theatre*

THE FIRST TIME I saw Henry Jewett on the stage, or anywhere, was at the Hollis Street Theatre when he was Julia Marlowe's leading man, and was playing Ingomar to her Parthenia in the once popular play from the German whose authorship is usually credited to Maria Lovell. It was in those days a favorite with young feminine stars, for the heroine is a delightfully ingenuous and winsome character. Mr. Jewett, a handsome young man then about thirty years of age, was as attractive because of his personality as he was impressive in his acting. He had come to this country with Mrs. Jewett from Australia by way of San Francisco, and he never returned to his native land. He had made a name for himself on the stage there and in New Zealand, and after coming east from the Pacific coast he never had to seek engagements in leading parts. He was an actor whose work was always in demand.

My acquaintance with him was made while he was playing John Storm in "The Christian" during its first and long engagement at the Boston Museum in 1899. He had succeeded Edward J. Morgan and Joseph Haworth in that role at the close of its New York season, and since it was enormously successful, because of itself and also as a result of the popularity of Hall Caine, it was one of the hits of that



epoch, especially with Viola Allen as Glory Quayle. Mr. Jewett and I became, I think I am justified in saying, close friends for the rest of his life, up to the moment of his death in 1930 at the age of sixty-seven. I knew Mrs. Jewett very well, and had many pleasant conversations with her during the Copley and Repertory seasons. They both had for a long time the idea of a theatre of their own in Boston, and after a tentative brief season at the Plymouth Theatre, a longer stay at the Boston Opera House devoted wholly to Shakespearean productions, and their seven years at the Copley Theatre, their dream became a reality.

Some years after this engagement in "The Christian," when the Jewetts were living in Boston, and I was again settled there after my residence in London, Mr. Jewett came to me at the Transcript with the good news that, as he expected to make his permanent home in the United States, he thought it right to become an American citizen. Since it was necessary for two of his friends to swear they had known him for a certain number of years, he asked me if I would stand up with him for that purpose. There was no hesitation about my affirmative reply, and the other friend was Oliver Hewitt, whom I was to meet often during our connection with the Copley and Repertory theatres, and who became a valuable addition to my staff of Transcript book reviewers. The naturalization procedure was in two parts; we first went over to an office in a near-by building, where he was questioned and registered, and after a waiting period of two years, we accompanied him to the United States District Court in the Federal Building for the final session before the judge and witnesses.

Mention of this appearance in court reminds me of the very few times I have been summoned as a witness before a judge. The first was many years ago in a probate court to swear to my signature as witness to the will of a friend who had recently died. This was a simple matter, as was also the

nationalization affair with Henry Jewett. The others were complex and annoying, and not likely to give anyone a favorable or even a respectful idea of the dignity or common sense of legal proceedings. Once I was summoned to appear in a police court as a witness of an automobile accident in front of my house early one Sunday morning when I was foolish enough to go outdoors and thereby make myself liable to a summons. The second was my enforced going to one of the courtrooms in the Federal Building to swear that I had received a release notice sent me by the publishers of an important magazine article; and the third was an interview before a master in the Suffolk County courthouse in the matter of a book review in the Transcript. In none of these was my testimony of any value, and I was therefore obliged to waste several hours in each case because of the intricacies and dilatoriness of the law. It is unnecessary for me to go into details about any of these cases, but I merely want to relieve my mind upon the stupidity and futility of some of the ways of the courts.

# 52

## *Henry Jewett and the Repertory Theatre*

OVER A YEAR PASSED between the closing of the Copley Theatre and the opening of the Repertory Theatre in November, 1915, an intervening experimental season at the Castle Square Theatre under Mr. Jewett's direction having collapsed after only five weeks in the September of the previous year. All energies were at once devoted to the erection of the new playhouse on Huntington Avenue, its completion being a notable piece of planning and execution that filled scarcely more than a twelvemonth. In the meantime temporary offices were opened in a block directly across the street, and from its windows we could watch the new theatre as it rose almost brick by brick from foundation to cornice. It was an ambitious project, and its success would have made it a permanent landmark in the theatrical history of Boston. But that was not to be, although four years were to pass before the futility of its ideals was demonstrated.

Mr. Jewett's career as an actor virtually closed with his appearances in the character of Count Vasili Vasilivitch in William Hodge's play, "The Man from Home," in support of its author. The Jewetts had taken up their permanent home in Boston, where Mrs. Jewett was a practitioner of

Christian Science, both being devotees of that faith. I remember that he acted not over a dozen characters at the Copley and Repertory theatres, each for only a short time. First of all he appeared at the Copley as Dr. Chi Lung in "The Chinese Puzzle." He had been for so long out of the habit of studying a part that he misjudged the time it would take him to prepare for the role and when the Monday for its opening came he telephoned me frantically in the early morning that the play could not possibly be given that evening, even though it had been announced and advertised many times in the daily newspapers. "That won't do," I exclaimed in response. "You know what they always say of an actor who is unable to appear." Whereat he said proudly, "They won't say it of me," for he then had no fondness for liquor. "You must carry it through somehow," I rejoined, and the matter was left indefinite.

When I went up to the theatre early in the evening, everything seemed to be going along as usual, and there was a line at the box office, doubtless attracted by the news that Mr. Jewett was to appear on the stage again after an absence. I happened to be standing at the back of the orchestra seats when at about eight o'clock the curtain rose, and there stood Mr. Jewett on the stage in his street clothes. Approaching the footlights, he made an apology, acknowledged that the fault was all his, confessed that he did not know his part, and said that the opening performance must be postponed until Wednesday evening. Whereupon the audience filed out of the theatre, and that was the first the box-office men knew there was to be no performance. They had been selling seats at the very moment when Mr. Jewett was announcing there would be no play that evening! He had not thought to tell them of his decision! "The Chinese Puzzle" was acted Wednesday, as promised, and it was continued through the rest of that week, and the whole of the next.

The other plays in which Mr. Jewett subsequently acted,

all at the Repertory, were given as announced. He appeared as Sir Lucius O'Trigger in "The Rivals" on the opening night of the new theatre, November 10, 1925, and through the ensuing two weeks. For two weeks more he acted Hendrick Hudson, a small part in "Rip Van Winkle," with Francis Wilson in the title role; and later his successive characters were John the Baptist, in an English adaptation of Sudermann's "Johannes"; the Stranger in Ibsen's "The Lady from the Sea"; the Engineer in Ernst Toller's German drama, "The Machine Wreckers"; Major Sergius Saranoff, a part he had played with Richard Mansfield over thirty years before in Shaw's "Arms and the Man." At his request I tried to induce John Craig, who was then an instructor in a Boston school of acting, to appear with him at the Repertory in the leading role of Bluntschli, but was unsuccessful, Mr. Craig's plea being that he could not give the necessary time to such a task, the complete reason doubtless being that he felt himself unable to undergo the studying of so long and difficult a role.

The last two characters acted by Mr. Jewett at the Repertory were Macbeth for three weeks in March, 1927; and William in Shaw's comedy, "You Never Can Tell," the following November. As far as I am aware, that was the last role he ever acted, and it was a fitting close to his career, for I make no reservation when I say that it was the finest piece of work he did in all his long service on the stage, and one of the most remarkable interpretations of character I have ever seen in any theatre. This is a strong statement, but it is a sound expression of my emotions. It was a genuine revelation of the old servant in which he absorbed himself so completely as to be almost unrecognizable solely because of the powers of characterization that are the foundations of the resourceful actor's art. I knew Henry Jewett thoroughly on and off the stage, and there were few traces of him visible or audible as I looked at him in the personality of Shaw's Wil-

liam, as he moved about, as he spoke, and as he gestured. Except in his figure and his stature he was not Henry Jewett. He retired then from the stage because he felt that he had no longer the mental energy or the physical strength to act a part of any importance. But he was able to remain active with his hand on the business affairs of the Repertory Theatre.

Since it was while the Repertory Theatre was in process of construction that I received the following letter, it may as well be interpolated here. I found it in my mail one morning when I went up to see Mr. Jewett at the temporary offices opposite the theatre.

THE REPERTORY THEATRE OF BOSTON

March 29, 1925

MY DEAR EDGETT

Too often, the way of the world is to take as a matter of course, good and faithful work, together with the devotion of the worker. As I recall our long friendship, extending now over twenty years, I am reminded of how many times you have helped and encouraged me, and how untiring and faithful you have been in your work for the advancement of Repertory in Boston. Especially during the past season, when seas have been rough you have proven yourself more than ever a friend, and I just want you to know how much Mrs. Jewett and I appreciate that friendship.

Sincerely

HENRY JEWETT

If anyone remarks to me that Henry Jewett was autocratic and unappreciative, all I need do by way of reply is to exhibit this letter. It is the expression of the inmost depths of his heart.

# 53

## *Back Stage and Out Front*

ALTHOUGH, LIKE JOHN CRAIG, Mr. Jewett had a stage director to take charge of the routine of rehearsals and performances, he invariably himself rehearsed the company in every play he gave at either theatre. No actor I ever knew, and I have known many, was more thoroughly grounded in the art of preparing a play for production. He knew all its minutiae out of his knowledge, study and experience. I used to watch him in the rehearsal room from time to time over many successive weeks that eventually amounted to years, and I always admired his constructive ability and the varied qualities of his technique. He knew how to act, and what is more he knew how to cause others to act to the best of their feeling for their art. I have seen him make an actress out of almost nothing, and sometimes I have wondered if the result was worth the effort and trouble he gave to it, especially since the effect of his instruction was not likely to be permanent without his constant direction. One member of his company, when he was asked if Mr. Jewett "presided" over the rehearsals, answered emphatically: "Preside! He reigns." And there was nothing derogatory in that.

The one fault that might reasonably be found with his method was that he was often too exigent; he tired out the actors by his thoroughness and pertinacity, especially with

his final rehearsals on the days of the opening evening performances. When he called a rehearsal on the morning of the second week of the presentation of a play, I have heard him say, in fact he said it to me: "This isn't the performance I gave them a week ago." He was certainly right, for during the week the actors had fallen away from his high standard, and he saw that it was impossible for them to recover it. Perhaps indeed some of them were merely walking through their parts. He never hesitated to give praise when he thought it was deserved, and neither was he reticent of blame, and perhaps once in a while of contempt. Frequent repetitions at rehearsals of lines or scenes had no terrors for him, whatever the actors might think of them. One actress came down into the office from a long rehearsal in a state of high indignation and exclaimed in my presence: "I'm tired of all this; here I am forced to stand around for hours while he teaches that woman how to act!" His highest commendation for work well done was in these four words, "He knows his job," and he repeated it to me of one or another actor many times. Nothing could be more forceful and downright than that. But his thoroughness would of course arouse occasional irritation in the minds of the best equipped members of his company.

Here is an anecdote about an occurrence due to Mr. Jewett's forgetfulness. It was a summerlike evening in April, 1922, the opening night at the Copley of a group of three Bernard Shaw one-act comedies, of which one was "Annajanska, or the Bolshevik Empress," in which Catherine Willard played the title role. Until almost the end she was swathed in a heavy fur coat which she suddenly threw back to disclose herself wearing the white uniform of a military officer. As usual, Mr. Jewett was driven in to the theatre from his home in Auburndale, and the minute he entered the office he was accosted by the stage manager with "The fur coat, Mr. Jewett?" Consternation reigned, especially on



Mr. Jewett's face, for it was his heavy coat that Miss Willard was to wear. He had forgotten it, he who was so often annoyed when anyone was derelict in his duty. He rushed to the sidewalk for his car, which was there, but the chauffeur had departed on an evening at liberty.

What was to be done? It happened that the play in question was scheduled to be acted second of the trio, and would not go on until after nine. Quietly, I said, "I have my driver's license in my pocket, and will go for it," although I knew it would not be an easy task, for I was not accustomed to the driving of such a light car as his. "Thanks," he said, "but you'd better take Mr. Sturtevant [his manager] with you." We started, and I was lucky to have a companion, for I was afraid to put on much speed. After about five minutes, Mr. Sturtevant said, "We'll never get there at this rate," to which I responded, "Well, you'd better drive, then"; and glad indeed was I to get the wheel out of my hands.

Whereupon we shifted seats, started again, reached the Jewett house after a five-mile drive, grabbed the coat, which had been telephoned for to be in readiness, and started on the return journey sure of arriving at the theatre in time if we met with no mishap. The way was up and down the hills and around the curves of Commonwealth Avenue into Boston, with Mr. Sturtevant, who was arrayed in evening dress surmounted by a derby hat, driving much faster than the law allowed. Suddenly a motor-cycle policeman drew up alongside, and peremptorily ordered us to stop. Explanations of the emergency flowed glibly from Mr. Sturtevant's lips, and the policeman was so impressed by his eloquence that he said: "All right, go on, but drive slowly the rest of the way." We went on, but with little lessening of the frantic haste.

We reached the theatre in ample time, took the overcoat in, handed it to Mr. Jewett, and the performance continued as if nothing had happened. The climax to my part in the affair came when Mr. Sturtevant turned to me immediately

after our return, and said casually: "Perhaps you would like to know that I hadn't driven an automobile for two years until tonight." As a rule, he was one of the most placid men I ever knew. The only time I can remember his showing any nervousness or excitement was at the beginning of the six weeks season at the Fine Arts Theatre that bridged an interval when the removed and reconstructed Copley Theatre was being completed for reopening. Everything then was at sixes and sevens. The Fine Arts was and is a small playhouse in the State Theatre building on Massachusetts Avenue, and since it was erected primarily for motion picture display, it was wholly inadequate for the acting of plays. The stage is small, there is no place for scenery storage, and what settings are necessary had to be kept out in the open air on the fire escape, effort being made to give only those plays that required no change of scene. Naturally the moving back to the Copley was a cause for rejoicing on all sides, especially for Mr. Sturtevant, who by then had returned to his normal condition. This reopening came after an intermediary season in which Mr. Jewett took his company to Northampton and found favor there in the presenting of a number of plays from his repertory. I remained in Boston, for they did not need me, and I was glad.

# 54

## *Here and There with Henry Jewett*

IT WAS MR. JEWETT'S HABIT to have me sit with him in one of the Copley boxes in the rear of the orchestra seats at an opening performance on Monday evenings, and while I liked to be in his intimate company I disliked the straight-backed cane-seated chairs by comparison with the soft-cushioned seats in the orchestra. Sometimes, before the curtain rose, he would rise from his chair and say: "Come with me." We would go around to the stage, and he would survey the situation, with all ready for the beginning of the first act, to see if anything was wrong with the scenery and stage settings. One evening, his eye caught sight of a common small table, and rushing to it, he turned it completely around, exclaiming: "There's a right way and a wrong way of doing a thing." What he meant was that the stage hands had placed the table with its drawer away from instead of towards the audience. Nothing like that escaped him. It was a small matter, but with him there were no small matters on the stage, and what he did added to the perfection of the performance.

He always wanted my opinion of the play and its performance during the first entr'acte, but what he really desired was not a frank judgment, but at least a measure of approval. One evening between the acts he entered the Copley Theatre office, which was across the lobby back of the

orchestra stalls, and asked his usual question: "Well, what do you think of it?" Thoughtlessly, I said: "How did you happen to pick this play?" He scowled, but said nothing, not even a retort discourteous. The next morning, when I was making my daily visit to the theatre, he glared at me, and said, almost as if he intended me to take him literally: "I could have killed you last evening when you asked me how I happened to pick that play." That was all, nothing more was said; but of course I have survived to tell the story. Anyone who knew Henry Jewett, with his stalwart figure, his beautiful blue eyes, his alternate tempests and serenities, could get along with him easily, for if he was peremptory at one moment, he was genial at the next. His smile and his frequent good humor would disarm anybody.

I haven't the slightest idea why it was, but he always seemed to be fond of me. His heart was often on his sleeve, whether his mood was favorable or unfavorable. The storm never lasted long, and neither did the calm. For about three weeks at the Repertory Theatre I was out of the place as press agent, and a young woman was put in my stead, but not, I am certain, through any desire of his. He had been overruled by someone. One evening he telephoned me at my home and said: "Come up tomorrow morning, will you? I want to talk to you." I went up, and it was exactly what I had anticipated: "I want you to come back." I went back, and remained there until the Repertory ended its career as a playhouse. During that three weeks absence, I was sitting in the back row of the orchestra on a Monday evening talking to Oliver Hewitt, when he loomed up and said curtly: "Get up, Oliver, I want to speak to Edgett." Oliver obeyed, and Mr. Jewett sat down, although he had nothing important to say. He simply wanted the pleasure, or whatever it was, of my company.

No one understood him better than Mrs. Jewett, who was his associate, his guide and his help in all his labors. She had

a great deal to do in the management of the Repertory Theatre, in the selection of the plays, and she bore the brunt of its financial troubles. She was the power behind the throne, and towards the end, when Mr. Jewett was not at all well, hers was the responsibility. She said to me once, "Of course you know that Mr. Jewett can be very exasperating," and I could do nothing but agree with her. It was no secret from anybody. They would often go shopping together in the interests of the theatre, and Mrs. Jewett remarked to me incidentally that their joint presence in a store was disconcerting to both. "Mr. Jewett does not like to have me with him because I spoil his bargaining; and I am frequently humiliated by his attempts to beat down the clerks."

Here is a good story told me by Mrs. Jewett of the days when he was on the road with Virginia Harned in Pinero's comedy, "Iris." When they reached Boston, which was then their home, she went on an evening to see the play, of which she had heard little with reference to its finale. Just as the last curtain was about to fall, Maldonado, the character Mr. Jewett was playing, gets into such a rage that he proceeds to smash the furniture on the stage. Realizing that the end of the play was imminent, as she told me, "Unaware of what was to come, I stooped down to pick up my wraps lying at my feet, when suddenly I heard a terrific noise from the stage, and I almost exclaimed aloud: 'Good heavens, has Harry gone crazy?'" She knew how frantic he could become in a moment of emotional stress, but she quickly recovered as she realized that it was all in the play. His friends universally called him Harry. His full name was Henry Robson Jewett, but he had not used his middle name or its initial for years.

The feminine influence at the Repertory was strong, and justifiably so, for the money to purchase the land on which it stood had been raised by the energetic efforts of a group of women, and there was a long list of contributors to the

fund, a thousand dollars each from some of the leading Boston merchants, as well as from private individuals. On the board of trustees at one time and another were Mrs. John C. Abbot, Mrs. Henry Jewett, Mrs. J. Weston Allen, Miss Hope Ladd, Courtenay Guild, Hon. J. Weston Allen, former Attorney General of Massachusetts, Edward L. Sturtevant, Oliver Hewitt, and Dr. Payson Smith, Commissioner of Education for the state. Mr. Allen did valiant work in minimizing the expenses of the theatre, because of its charter as an educational institution, whereby it was freed of the payment of real estate taxes and of taxes on tickets purchased, these being, I believe, concessions made to no other theatre in Boston. All these advantages, however, did little to help the theatre become a going concern.

Unfortunately the selection of plays was not always happy, but it is certainly worth recording that during Mr. Jewett's entire direction of his two Boston theatres, he produced no fewer than twenty-two, including one-act comedies, of George Bernard Shaw's plays. His ideal of the establishment of a stock or repertory company—he always preferred the latter term, which in his case was rather inexact—was ambitious, but as I look back upon it, the failure of the Repertory Theatre was foreordained. It was not well situated to draw large audiences, and the emphasis placed upon its educational purposes did not give it an appeal to the multitude that looks upon a playhouse and plays as means of relaxation and entertainment. Furthermore, during all the days of its struggles, the heyday of this type of theatre enterprise was waning, and what the majority of the public wanted to see on the stage was new plays and fresh faces among the players, instead of the same actors week after week through season after season. Also then was arising the wider and less expensive appeal of the motion pictures.

# 55

## *Repertory Beginnings and Endings*

FOR THE OPENING of the Repertory Theatre in November, 1925, Francis Wilson had been brought forward as a "guest star," which was rather contrary to Mr. and Mrs. Jewett's purpose and ideals. Despite the fame of that musical comedy star who in his later days on the stage became an actor in serious plays, his appearances did little to foster the aims of a permanent repertory or stock company theatre. Neither "The Rivals" nor "Rip Van Winkle" was received with any wide acclaim. Wilson had long wanted to act the sleeper of the Catskills, but his efforts to persuade the Players Club in New York to offer it as one of its annual productions had been futile because its object was to present as many of its members as possible in important roles, and Rip is a star part and almost the entire play.

This was Francis Wilson's chance to achieve his ambition to act Rip, at least for two weeks, and he made a noble effort, although I never heard of his reappearance in it. He had the assistance of Mr. Jewett in the insignificant role of Hendrick Hudson, but that amounted to little, as he had consented to act the character solely in order to help the production. Off stage Wilson was very companionable, without any of the airs that many a lesser actor might assume foolishly. As I rode downtown with him in a street car one morning he

called my attention to a brown paper bag he was carrying in his hand. "These are French rolls," he said. "I'm going to breakfast with some friends, and as I'm very fond of them, I know they will not care if I bring part of the bill of fare with me." I have an excellent framed memento of him in an autographed photograph that shows him as the youthful and beardless Rip Van Winkle who later went to sleep for twenty years.

After this month or so at the Repertory Theatre, Francis Wilson left Boston never to return, at least professionally. He had had his brief day there and was probably satisfied to go into retirement after a half-century and more on the stage as a comic opera star and in the acting of principal roles in comedies. A revival of Ibsen's play "The Wild Duck" next came and prospered unexpectedly, as did a few revivals of well known plays, but after five strenuous and almost hopeless years the repertory enterprise was abandoned just as the year 1930 was dawning. A season of motion pictures followed as a concession to the popular taste of the day and year, but the Repertory continued open only a few months, and is now one of the numerous interesting temporary episodes in the dramatic history of Boston. My connection with it was severed when the theatre turned to the screen, but to the very end Mr. Jewett would telephone me or call upon me at my office for advice or assistance.

With this closing of the Repertory Theatre ended my long and almost uninterrupted experience with theatres and their managers. It had lasted from 1900 to 1930. I had begun it almost immediately after my return from London in 1900, and there were only brief intermissions in my work of thirty years. During the greater part of that time it was merely incidental to my duties as literary editor of the Transcript, for my profession was always journalism. What I gained from all this in New York, on the road with touring companies, and at a succession of theatres in Boston, was not only the money



that came from it, but also a knowledge of the stage and its people, and of the world at large. It increased my acquaintance with both the business and the profession of the theatre, and it aided me as a series of valuable diversions from my Transcript work. But I was glad to give it up, and by its renunciation I gained a welcome release from what was really a dual life that had kept my body and mind desperately active. Because of it, my years at the time and in retrospect mean much more to me than if I had been tied to an office desk, or immured within brick walls with my nose to the grindstone of writing, editing and manuscript reading. My world by means of it was broadened and enlarged by this connection with the stage and my association with its people. It gave me an understanding of the varieties of human experience that I could never otherwise have obtained.

# 56

## *With Another Actor*

LET ME GO BACK for a space of time and scene to another actor who was a bright and shining star in his day. This is the first chance I have had to embody him in my memorabilia of the theatre. He was James K. Hackett, and as I recall him he now appears to be scarcely more than a dim shadow of the past. His prosperity and repute seem almost incredible as I look back into the days when I knew him. At one time he cut so wide a swath in the theatre world that he established offices in some of the leading American and European capitals. His headquarters were of course in New York, and the extent of his interests emboldened him to have representatives in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and elsewhere. Anyone who went to foreign shores could obtain information about his ventures from his co-workers in Paris, London and other cities. Few American actors, even of greater fame than Hackett, had such far-flung organizations. His stationery gave the requisite news of his whereabouts to all inquirers.

I had heard that he wanted someone in Boston to speak for him, and I was impelled to ask for the position and add it to my other seemingly endless duties. At his suggestion, I made a day-trip over to New York, saw him in the home where he was living with his wife, Mary Mannering, whom he had met while both were members of Daniel Frohman's Lyceum The-

atre company, made the essential arrangements with him, and returned to Boston by the midnight train. Thereafter I was in frequent correspondence with Hackett or his manager, but had little to do for him except when he was playing in Boston.

When he came to Boston with "The Crisis," its popularity was astounding. For four weeks the Tremont Theatre was filled to the doors with the largest audiences it had ever held at ordinary prices. I am confident that while Hackett himself doubtless aided its popularity, its success must have been reenforced by the widespread fame of the novel by Winston Churchill upon which the play was founded. He was forced to leave Boston at that time because of prior bookings both by himself and by the theatre, but a return of two weeks later in the season was a dire failure. Such is the inconsistent fate of many theatrical undertakings. The life of the play had expired in a few months. It had become nothing better than a thing of the past. It and the novel itself are now in the limbo of the forgotten episodes of the stage and the book world. Before Hackett and I separated, the new Globe Theatre was opened with another dramatized novel for its attraction in which he played the title role. This was "John Ermine of the Yellowstone," but it soon vanished from the glare of the foot-lights.

The letters that passed between us were wholly on matter-of-fact business details, and they therefore fail to reveal the personal characteristics of the young actor who at the age of only thirty had mounted high on the theatrical ladder. His middle name was Keteltas, and he was of Dutch ancestry, his father being the James H. Hackett who is a comedian of lasting fame in the American theatre, especially notable in his day as the personification of Shakspeare's Falstaff. After a period as a "matinee idol," young Hackett found himself in the ranks of the popular romantic American actors.

His mother was the elder Hackett's second wife, and she was so proud of her son that she was in the habit of accom-

panying him on his tours, being always at the gate watching the crowds go in for the purpose of seeing him act his heroic roles. The Hackett entourage was most imposing, for it included in addition to the regular company and stage crew, several other persons whose services even greater actors than he would think unnecessary. Among them was a personal secretary whose name was William Dobbin, familiar to anyone who remembers the personages in Thackeray's "Vanity Fair." Actors' mothers are not customarily essential to their sons' or daughters' appearances on the stage, and Hackett's was no exception. I have the impression, perhaps wrong, that he merely tolerated her as a travelling companion, at least back stage, although I have no doubt that he highly regarded her.

One evening, while I was in conversation with him in his dressing room at the Globe Theatre, there came a knock at the door which brought from him the impatient query: "Who is it?" In response to a faint "Mother," the son said brusquely, "Go away, Mother—I'm busy." Who could blame him, for he was making up as well as talking to me? My association with him ended when he was forced to curtail expenses. Later he came into what was reported to be a huge ancestral fortune of over a million dollars, and he spent a good portion of it in forwarding an ambition to become a celebrated purveyor of expensive productions of Shakspeare. They brought him little added fame and no prosperity, and he died untimely before he was sixty, leaving little more than a vanished memory as an ambitious actor who tried to do too much.

*About William Seymour*

ALMOST ANYWHERE in this chronicle will come pertinently the name of William Seymour. In the profession of the stage, and with large groups of the public outside of it, he was widely known. I myself knew him almost from the day of my arrival in 1894 as dramatic editor of the Transcript, until the beginning of the illness that ended his life in the autumn of 1933. He was not quite forty at the time of our first meeting, and he lived into his seventy-eighth year. He came of theatrical parentage, his father being a comedian who had migrated from Ireland in his youth, and his mother's name will be found in the playbills of many American theatres as Mrs. L. E. Seymour. She was Lydia Eliza Griffith before her marriage. The family name was Cunningham, which had been abandoned by the father when he ran away from home to go on the stage, but Seymour it has remained ever since for their children and grandchildren. As "Willie Seymour" his name will be found on unnumbered programs when he was acting in his childhood and youth, and as "Willie" he was known to multitudes of his friends all through his long life. He was less than two years old when he was carried in his mother's arms on the stage of a New Orleans theatre, and he remained uninterruptedly in and of the profession into which he had been born.

Our acquaintance began in the lobby of the Tremont Theatre while he was holding there the position of house manager. We were brought together through frequent meetings, and he was in my mind continuously, because of the receipt of notes and memoranda that he sent to me almost daily about his theatre's activities. They were not the ordinary conventional press agent's statements of mere fact, but friendly little missives that bore the stamp of his genial personality. They were among the most welcome messages that came to my desk, and I have some of them still in my possession. A great many of the letters I later received from him are now in the William Seymour Theatre Collection at the Princeton University Library. He had come to the Tremont Theatre after varied appearances throughout the country in support of Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, Edwin Forrest and other stars, and with the last of these three it is noteworthy that, at the age of sixteen, he acted the role of François in "Richelieu" at that tragedian's last appearance on the stage of the Globe Theatre in Boston on April 2, 1872.

His longest and most important engagement up to the time of the beginning of our friendship was the period of his ten seasons at the Boston Museum, where he acted a varied range of characters while he was also serving as stage manager. After leaving the Tremont Theatre in 1898, he travelled with Sol Smith Russell as his stage director, he was manager of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, and for a long time a leading member of Charles Frohman's staff as general stage director, actor and historian. His familiarity with all matters of the stage in its infinite details, and his knowledge of the abilities and personalities of his fellow actors especially equipped him for all the duties of his manifold positions. There were few men of the stage in his day with whom he was not closely associated as co-worker and friend.

After he left Boston, there were long intervals between our meetings, but we heard from each other frequently by letter

—mine always under date of Boston from the Transcript office, and his from New York, Washington, Chicago or further away when he was on his tours from one end of the country to the other. Since he was a much better correspondent than I, and a far more entertaining letter-writer, I fear the exchange of letters was always in my favor. His contacts with persons and events in his profession were many, and his letters were filled with accounts of the doings of others as well as of his own. For years he had a summer home in the little village of South Duxbury, near Plymouth; and there during his last years, especially after his wife's death in 1927, he lived in semiretirement, with frequent visitors from his wide circle of acquaintance, and of course the members of his family. Across the road from his New England country home stands the large estate and mansion that had belonged to his sister-in-law, Fanny Davenport.

Whenever he visited Boston, usually for only a few hours, he was happy in making his calls upon his friends, and invariably he came in to see me for a chatty half-hour or so of pleasant reminiscence. He was a man out of the past, to be sure, but he was a man in the present. He did not live wholly in the past, but like many of us he delighted in recalling it. He revelled in its memories, as did I. He always carried with him a little memorandum book of anniversary records and dates, and nothing pleased him more than to say: "This is So-and-so's —th birthday," or that such and such an event, usually the production of a certain play, took place "so many years ago this very day." A jocose remark of his more than once was: "Mrs. Fiske and I have the same birthday, but she is ten years younger than I." It might be thought that these reminiscent journeys into the past would pall upon one, but I always listened gladly to them, and so also, I am sure, did his many friends when he repeated them.

Such a man as William Seymour, in and out of the theatre, was a valued friend to anyone, and especially to me, deeply

immersed as I have been all my life in its lore, its traditions and history through all its epochs. The fascination of his letters was in what he said and in how he said it. He had a flowing, a coherent and a charmingly readable style, and his penmanship made their reading a double pleasure. There was no blind handwriting to come between his thought and my mind. Here is one of them, written under date of January 2, 1907, from his office as general director for Charles Frohman in the Empire Theatre in New York. He wrote:

MY DEAR MR. EDGETT,

A Happy New Year to you and yours. Just an item for the Transcript. On Jan'y 8, 1907, Mrs. Seymour and I will celebrate (D.V.) our twenty fifth wedding anniversary. Although we were married here in New York City, at the Little Church Around the Corner, our five exhibits, A, B, C, D, and E, were born in Boston—and we feel that we still are citizens of the dear old city. I think our many friends there will be pleased to know that we have reached the "silver" age of our connubial felicity.

With regards and good wishes,

I am sincerely yours,

WILLIAM SEYMOUR.

P.S. As a business item, it may interest the theatrically inclined to know that on Dec. 19, 1906, I concluded my 44th year of active work on the stage, and on Jan'y 1, 1907 my 34th year as a stage director, and of the 44 years nearly half have been passed in Boston.

It was while he was at the Boston Museum in 1882 that he was married to May Davenport, daughter of Edward Loomis Davenport, and he was therefore a brother-in-law of Fanny Davenport. My wife and I visited them in their South Duxbury home to stay over a Saturday night into Sunday afternoon soon after we returned from London, and years later we called on them at the same place when we were driving down to the Cape Cod Canal from a summer hotel where we were staying in Scituate on my vacation.



Of their family of five children (to each of whom, so proud were they of the family ancestry, they had given Davenport as part of his or her name), only one, the youngest, adopted the stage as a permanent profession. For over fifty years Mr. Seymour acquired and treasured a huge number of play-books, playbills, letters and other relics of the stage, and they are now in the aforementioned William Seymour Theatre Collection in the Princeton University Library, among them being a large number of the letters he had written to me. It was his intention to prepare his autobiography for publication with the assistance of his son James, but like many others who held that idea in mind for the future, he never completed it. It would have been a grand series of reminiscences of more than half a century of a fertile life on the stage that had had its beginnings in infancy.

# 58

## *Who Was O. Henry?*

ALONG ABOUT 1905 a tempest in a teapot began to seethe, and I regret to say that I was the one who helped to light the fire that started the water boiling. I wish I might be allowed to say who inspired me to take part in the quarrel, but that is impossible, for I am sworn to secrecy even these many years afterwards. Those were the days when there had begun to appear in the New York World a series of highly original and captivating short stories signed with the obviously mythical name of O. Henry. Everybody knows now who O. Henry was, but the question of that day was: "Who is O. Henry?" I was informed that he was So-and-so, and recklessly printed the inaccurate news in the Transcript. That was when the teapot began to boil over, and I was scalded and almost suffocated by the steam. It was disclosed that a certain young man living not far from Boston had said that he was O. Henry; but to maintain and substantiate the claim was too much for him, and when he was accused of falsifying, he finally acknowledged that he had told a lie. My informant wrote me an apologetic letter, and what is more important I received a letter from a well known author who knew the inside story of the identity of O. Henry.

His letter must remain unquoted and anonymous, but I was fully convinced that its writer knew O. Henry himself

and his right name, and that, while he could not disclose it, the time would come when the world would know all about him. At last the revelation was made, and through the years the story of O. Henry has proved to be more diverting than any of the tales written by that highly popularized author of short stories that hold a unique place in American fiction. As his fiction continued to be published with increasing favor, it seemed to be about time for the truth to be told, and it was told. O. Henry's name was acknowledged to be William Sydney Porter, and his years, not so very many, had been filled with adventure and romance, not a little of which was related at that time, and much more in later biographical records of his strange life. He was a native of North Carolina and had wandered near and far.

At last he came north, settled in New York, and began the writing of short stories, many of them with the surprise ending which he popularized, but did not invent, as has been claimed. He observed keenly the life about him, wherever he was, used it for the purposes of his fiction, and after a sore struggle with penury reached a moderate amount of affluence first through the receptivity of the *New York World*, and then by the interest of editors of magazines and the publishers of books. Enthusiasm was at its height about him for a long time, but he is now outmoded. Nevertheless his fame is preserved in several ways, conspicuously by an O. Henry Hotel in his honor in the North Carolina town of Greensboro, where he was born, and by the annual O. Henry Memorial Award volume of collected short stories written by latter-day tellers of tales who were not necessarily his imitators, although he has had many. His health began to fail, he went back to his native South in search of a cure, but eventually returned to New York, where he died in 1910 at the early age of forty-seven while he was at the top of his fame. Much of his writing was ephemeral, but because of the picturesqueness of his life and the fact that of itself it makes many a

good narrative, he remains a conspicuous figure in the American literary world of the first decade of the twentieth century. Perhaps his freakish pen name was one of his most important assets.

# 59

## *Hours with a Magician*

ONE DAY MY OFFICE DOOR OPENED, and there entered a low-voiced stranger. Approaching me as I sat at my desk, he said with a questioning inflection: "Mr. Edgett?" and after my affirmative reply, he continued: "Do you know who I am?" I looked puzzled, hesitated, and then to my amazement I heard him say: "Houdini." I had not recognized the great Houdini, hero of thousands of audiences and millions of spectators in the cities of two hemispheres! I concealed my discomfiture as best I could, and soon we were talking as if we had been old comrades. That was Houdini's way. Never have I known a more friendly man. He had no axe to grind by calling on me, and I never discovered why he looked me up. From that day onward we seemed almost inseparable in the field of companionship, but of course we did not see each other often, for I was tied to Boston, and he to New York and his travelling engagements, some of which carried him as far away as Australia. If there had been transportation facilities to the North Star, and time for him to get there in a lifetime, I am sure that would have been one of his destinations.

We were in frequent correspondence, and every time he returned to Boston, which was not so often as I wished, he came knocking at my door—figuratively, I mean, for he and everybody had the right of immediate entrance. At one visit

he would talk about his rapidly increasing library, at another about when he was in such and such a town, at another that he was on the track of a valuable psychical or spiritualistic array of books somewhere in the vicinity of Boston, and at another that he was going into aviation as a side issue. Nothing human was foreign to him. Sometimes also he would be seeking an important theatrical collection, and again he was engaged in the exposure of one or more fraudulent mediums. He was an indefatigable collector of books on many subjects—on magic and magicians of course, and in fact upon everything in which he was interested. His hobbies seemed to be unlimited.

I would call on him at his hotel whenever he came to Boston, and he would often write me or telephone me to let me know he wanted to see me. I wish now I had accepted his repeated invitations to look in on him in his dressing room on an afternoon or evening. I did not refuse, but I was always fearful of interrupting him when he was most busy, although I am sure I could have sat with him an hour or more in perfect content for both of us. I would lunch with him and his wife occasionally, for she always travelled with him wherever he went, and one noon as we sat at table in the Adams House, he said suddenly: "Come to see me, won't you, some day this week?" Of course I replied that I should be glad to. "Bring your wife," he continued. "Tomorrow evening I do my packing-box escape, don't I?" this to his wife. It was the most important feature of his turn that week.

"Come with me," he said, as he rose from the table, and we rushed (he was always quick and active in every movement, on and off the stage) around into the lobby of Keith's Theatre, which was next door to the hotel. Leaving me outside of the manager's office, he entered without ceremony, and soon emerged with a pair of tickets in his hand that entitled us to two of the best seats in the house. When the time came, we watched with eager interest his famous escape act,

and we have never discovered the *modus operandi* by which he freed himself from a tightly roped and nailed box. On another evening I saw him at a performance in Symphony Hall as the centre of attraction for three hours. He had especially engaged the place at his own expense in his eagerness to disclose some of the secrets of a well known medium, revealing in many ways his knowledge and skill in the technique of a spiritualistic séance. In all of this he was clearly the man who had a right to be called the great Houdini.

Some time afterwards came what was to be our final farewell. On an evening in September, 1926, I went with a friend to the Majestic Theatre to watch him as the star of his own show at the head of his company. He had made me vow to call on him in his dressing room, and, going around to the stage door during the interval, I asked for him. I was ready for the expected answer. "Impossible," said the doorkeeper in his most impressive manner. "Will you please," I insisted, "tell Mr. Houdini that Mr. Edgett of the Transcript and his friend Mr. Jackson are asking for him?" Reluctantly the message was delivered, and we were told to go down a flight of stairs to his dressing room at the foot. He was of course busy changing, but we were welcomed cordially, talked for a few minutes and were introduced to his manager. Then we left, but not until Mrs. Houdini, who had quietly entered the room, and who was acting as one of his assistants on the stage, picked up a hairbrush and proceeded to smooth down his tousled head.

We returned to our seats to watch the rest of the entertainment, and that was our last sight of Houdini. Only a few weeks later, on October 31, 1926, as he was continuing his tour westward, he was dead in a Detroit hospital of an accidental blow in the abdomen received from a McGill University student with whom he had been sparring in his dressing room at a Montreal theatre. Thus his friendly nature brought about his death. In the interim I had had no letter from him,

but a bundle of newspapers had reached me from Montreal in which there were marked articles about himself and his tour, with a few words of pencilled comment. He died at the age of fifty-two, and anyone who cares to know the wonderful story of a wonderful life may read it in many of its details in the biography written by Harold L. Kellock with the assistance of Mrs. Houdini.

His letters to me are now, with other characteristic Houdini memorabilia, in the Theatre Collection of the Harvard College Library, and they all give a view of the friendly and informal manner of his correspondence. The upper part of this "Lettergram" through the words "Cordially yours, Houdini," is printed; the rest is written in his own hand.

(Hand) Permanent Address 278 West 113 St., New York City

(Portrait)      L E T T E R G R A M      (Portrait)

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Please pardon any incivility in this letter. It has been rushed to you under stress of business and written in the dressing-room. Therefore all formalities like Dear Sir, Dear Madame, etc., have been omitted—not to be curt or brusque; but that it is deemed better to let you hear from me in a lettergram of a few words than not at all.

Cordially yours,  
HOUDINI

Dear E. Thanks for letter. Sorry you did not bring Mrs. E. back stage to meet my charming assistant. I am coming to B. some day just to spend more time in your company. Regards

HOUDINI

Don't forget if you read that I am lecturing in or around B. this is your invite. Please pardon scrawl. Constant dictation has not helped beautify my penstrokes.

I have also two autographed books of his in my library; one of them is inscribed with these words: "To my friend E. F. Edgett Best wishes and regards Houdini. It has taken



30 years constant work to be able to put some of my research and experience between the covers of this book. Hope you like it." It was published in 1924 and its title is "A Magician Among the Spirits." The other book of his that I have is "Miracle Mongers and Their Methods, a Complete Exposé of the Modus Operandi of Fire Eaters, Heat Resisters, Poison Eaters, Venomous Reptile Defiers, Sword Swallowers, Human Ostriches, Strong Men, etc.," and it was published in 1920. He wrote several other books, among them "The Unmasking of Robert-Houdin," from whom he derived his stage name. His real name was Ehrich Weiss, and he was the son of Rabbi Mayer Samuel Weiss, who with his wife, Cecilia Steiner, had migrated from Hungary to Wisconsin shortly before he was born.

The "charming assistant" he mentions in his "Lettergram" is his wife, and here is a letter I received from her several years after his death. She had written me earlier, but that letter has apparently been lost.

28 RIDGELAND TERRACE,  
RYE, N.Y. May 23, 1932

DEAR MR. EDGETT—

On my return from Florida I found the clippings you so kindly sent me. I wish to thank you for same. I believe I have met you. I remember quite well that you were a valued friend to Houdini, but since his death (I had been very ill) I do not remember so keenly whether I knew you personally. However, I deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness in not forgetting our beloved Houdini's widow.

BEATRICE HOUDINI.

Not long ago I wrote to Mrs. Houdini through the legal representatives of the magician in New York, for her permission to use these letters in this book, and it came from her in the following words:

HOLLYWOOD, CALIF.

January 8, 1940

DEAR MR. EDGETT:

It is a pleasure to recall the many times Houdini and I showed in Boston and the hospitality and friendship of that lovely city.

I vividly recall that one of the highlights, always, was Houdini looking forward to a chat and visit with you. It seemed that the two of you had so much in common; that you both "spoke the same language," as it were, and I am sure that Houdini, if he could but know, would be pleased and honored in your desire to include a letter from him to you, in your forthcoming autobiography.

It will also please you to know that the magicians of the United States honor his memory by observing National Magic Day each October 31st, (Hallowe'en) which was the day our beloved Houdini went on tour, forever. Eyes of Memory Never Sleep!

With all kind wishes to you and your loved ones, I am

Most Sincerely,

MRS. HARRY HOUDINI.

Houdini was so interested in the mystery of death and the permanence of human personality in whatever other world there may be that he left directions for the receipt of messages from him, if they were possible. As might have been expected, these efforts to communicate with him have been futile. But we have our memories of him, as Mrs. Houdini suggests in her letter to me, and they will always persist in the minds of those who knew him.

*A Writer of Biographies*

TOWARDS THE END of the 1920s I received a letter from Dr. Allen Johnson, former Professor of History in Yale University and other colleges, then beginning his duties as editor of the new "Dictionary of American Biography," asking me if I would contribute to that work. I gladly consented, and for about ten succeeding years was busily engaged at intervals in writing seventy of the biographical articles scattered through its twenty volumes. My work in their writing, brief though they were—they ranged in length from five hundred to fifteen hundred words—entailed much research into obscure sources, the greater number dealing with the lives of actors, actresses, dramatists and other people of the theatre.

Strange as it may seem to the uninitiated, the better known the subject of a biography, the easier it is to find and assemble facts and opinions about him. Minor persons necessitated more time in seeking information, for their names are not accessible in the more available books of reference. I had my own files at home for ready consultation, and I found the Harvard Theatre Collection a fruitful haven of both first and last resort, for it contains a vast amount of the sort of material I needed. At times I was compelled to engage in personal correspondence with those I hoped might prove helpful. Sometimes they were, and sometimes to my disap-

pointment they were not. A convenient resource was officials of the towns in which these men and women about whom I was writing were born, for as a rule I knew their birthplaces and their approximate birth dates. Once or twice I was able to discover that these dates had been purposely misstated because of the common failing of humanity to claim an approximate youth not theirs.

We went along through the alphabet from *A* to *Z*; and of course, in accordance with the rule in such reference books, no one in the land of the living was included. This limit is always necessary, for otherwise the work would extend to inordinate length. One of my first subjects was Lawrence Barrett, who proved to be easy; but when I reached Georgia Cayvan I found stumbling blocks in my way. She was a very popular actress of the last years of the nineteenth century, and she had advanced into the stage profession from the ranks of amateurdom. I knew that she was born in Bath, Maine, and I wrote to the city clerk for details about her early days there. He responded cordially, but was unable to find the exact data I wanted, and referred me to two or three old residents, but with a negative result. The best that I could do was to give only 1858 as the year of her birth. There also appeared to be a mystery about her surname, it apparently being something like "Cayvan," but not exactly that. After she had begun her stage career, my pathway was not difficult, for her appearances in Boston, New York and elsewhere were matters of definite record. At the outset of her professional career she had appeared with the Ideal Opera Company in "*Pinafore*," and as *Jocasta* in the Greek play, "*Oedipus Tyrannus*," with George Riddle in the title role.

On the other hand came my success with Raymond Hitchcock. He was born in Auburn, New York, and to its city clerk I wrote. At once came reply that he was glad to give me anything I wanted to know about that actor, for they were cousins. This was an amazing piece of good fortune,

and along I went until I found the name of Stuart Robson in my assignments, which were sent to me at regular intervals by Dr. Johnson, and after his untimely death in an automobile accident by his successor, Dr. Dumas Malone, now the Director of the Harvard University Press. The finances of the Dictionary were sponsored by Adolph S. Ochs of the New York Times to the extent of over half a million dollars. The editorial offices were in Washington, so as to be near the Library of Congress with its enormous reference resources.

I was not lacking information about Stuart Robson, who will be remembered by all old-time playgoers for his long association with William H. Crane, and later because he chose to go his own way as a solo star. He can never be forgotten by anyone who saw or heard him across the footlights, for his quaint personality and peculiar squeaky voice made him unable to act any character other than himself. I remember that in one of the annual Lambs Club shows, which I saw at the Boston Theatre, there was a minstrel show, with Stuart Robson as one of the end men and Nat Goodwin as the other. Goodwin stood up and said he was going to sing the famous old ditty, "With All Her Faults I Love Her Still," as Robson used to sing it—which he proceeded to do to perfection, for he was a great mimic. Then Robson arose, facing Goodwin from across the stage, and said, "I never sang that song in all my life"—and then sang it in the characteristic Robsonian manner. But—and this is the significant part of the story—Goodwin was more like Robson than Robson was like himself, for of course he had sought to minimize his vocal peculiarities as far as possible.

It happens that Stuart Robson was a name assumed by its bearer for stage purposes, and that in private life he was Henry Robson Stuart. Although I knew that, I thought it would be well for me to obtain legal authority for this statement, and I therefore wrote for its verification to the city clerk of Annapolis, Maryland, where the actor was born in

1836. But this time I was not so fortunate. His reply was a discourteous silence, possibly a rebuke for my curiosity. In any event it was an offense of which no public official should be guilty: it was his duty to answer my question. But there are too many office holders who do not know their duty. If he did not know what I asked him, he had simply to write to me in these words: "I am sorry to say that the city records lack the information you want."

When the letter *S* was reached soon after the Robson episode, I was assigned to write the story of Mary Shaw's life. I was glad, for I had seen her on the stage, knew something of her admirable qualities as an actress, and especially that she was born in Boston. But my quest was not easy, and provided me with unforeseen difficulties. I was happy to enlist the voluntary services of William M. Emery, my friend and one-time Transcript associate, who was later to join what might be called the "ex Transcript Club." He was a professional genealogist who made many valiant journeys into the land of ancestral mysteries, and he immediately utilized his talents to my advantage. Miss Shaw had given her birth year in more than one reference book as 1860, but now had come the time when the truth was to be told. At first she led us off the beaten track, but when we learned that she had been a teacher in the Boston public schools before she became an actress, and that those years were from 1873 to 1878, we knew there must be something wrong, for she could not have been such a prodigy of learning and so advanced in physical stature as to be able to teach school at the immature age of thirteen or fourteen. This information was also verified by another friend of mine, John H. Wilson, also of the Transcript staff.

Away went my friend Emery along a circuitous genealogical byway. By searching through all available records, especially those in city documents and municipal directories, and in spite of the fact that no fewer than six children named Mary Shaw were registered as having been born in Boston

in the fifties, the choice was made of the one and only Mary Shaw who was first a school teacher and then an actress. He had found *the* Mary Shaw. All this trouble had been caused by Miss Shaw's idea that she would succeed in her progress if she were thought to be six years younger than she actually was. She was born in 1854, and not in 1860. Let this be a warning to actresses (and all others) who seek to disguise their ages. The ways of genealogists are ruthless. Other phases of these biographical researches of mine are numerous, and it would not be difficult to make a sizable book of them. Among those whose biographies I wrote were the two Richard Henry Danas, Henry C. De Mille, Kate Field, Robert Mantell, John McCullough, James O'Neill, John E. Owens, Joseph Proctor, Sol Smith Russell, William Seymour, Mrs. J. R. Vincent and the two William Warrens.

*As a Maker of Books*

MY CAREER AS AN AUTHOR, although I doubt if I should use so imposing a word to describe my slight efforts, covered more than a quarter-century. I was really nothing better than a maker of books, largely out of material that had been printed in the Transcript. For many years, my friend John Bouvé Clapp, who in addition to his business as treasurer of a large wholesale grocery firm made it an avocation to write for the newspapers, and especially for the Transcript on stage matters, was of great help to me in gathering historical and biographical data on those subjects. It was our ambition at first to write a history of the Boston theatres, carrying on the story as it is told in William W. Clapp's "Record of the Boston Stage," published as long ago as 1853; but we were so busy with other things that we were obliged to abandon that scheme, which was too much even for such enthusiasts as we were. No one has yet succeeded in a task that would do for Boston what Professor George C. D. Odell is doing for New York. The only published supplement to the original William W. Clapp record that I know is the brief chapter appearing in the Memorial History of Boston. Mr. Clapp was also for a long time editor of the Notes and Queries and genealogical departments of the Transcript, and in that position he was succeeded by his daughter upon his death in 1921.



While I was dramatic editor, Mr. Clapp and I collaborated on a gathering of brief articles that appeared daily in my columns of the Transcript, and out of them we made four volumes, three dealing with "Players of the Present" and one with "Plays of the Present," that were published with the imprint of the Dunlap Society, an association of devotees of the theatre and its interests that contributed some thirty books to the already large accumulation of theatrical Americana. This society was named in honor of William Dunlap, the first historian of the American theatre, whose book was published in two volumes in 1833. I also wrote a biography of Edward Loomis Davenport, the American actor whose reputation rivals that of the Booths, the Jeffersons and Edwin Forrest, and this likewise appeared under the imprint of the Dunlap Society.

My name also appears on the title page of a novel entitled "Nami Ko" as its co-translator with Sakae Shioya, but I fear that that is somewhat misleading, since I do not know a word of the language of Japan. My work was simply to put my associate's Japanese English into a normal English version of the original. One example I remember was "he shuddered his shoulders." Since the novel was intended to arouse the interest of a book-buying audience that was reading the front-page newspaper accounts of the Russo-Japanese War ravaging the Far East in 1904, its publishers hoped it would be avidly sought by a public eager for more reading about that conflict; but they were mistaken, and the book came dead from the press, being now utterly forgotten.

Later I put together a little book of my quasi-versified quips, each of a dozen lines or so, entitled "Slings and Arrows." It too is dead, despite the clever illustrations from drawings by Dwight Taylor, and liberal free advertising in the Transcript. These ironical commentaries of mine on human foibles were first printed in every Wednesday and Saturday Transcript, and whatever favorable remarks they

aroused as they were read in the paper rather displeased me because of the implication that they were the only important part of the Writers and Books column to which they were appended. I was never informed by the publishers of the book as to how many copies they sold, but I doubt if the total reached even as high as one hundred. The fact that I did not receive a cent of royalty did not displease me, for I had not expected any. My efforts as a compiler or writer of books thereupon ended until I began work on this autobiography.

*My Friend Jackson*

HERE AND THERE Herbert I. Jackson (his middle name is Irving, but his first name is not Henry) appears among my personages, and he might as well now have a scene all to himself (with myself) among the many who are making their entrances and exits on my stage. He bears the same relation to my later *dramatis personae* as James Walter Smith does to my earlier, for over a long period we have been closely associated while the drama of our lives has gone forward from act to act. Our joint interest in the theatre brought and has held us together, in spite of the divergence in our temperaments, and our contradictory likes and dislikes. For years we saw each other daily if only for a few minutes, and there were other days when we spent many uninterrupted hours at work, at the play, at dinner in town, and on our vacations at Monadnock Mountain in company with our wives.

He came in to see me at the office for the first time—I cannot remember on what errand, but doubtless it was something to do with the theatre—about 1905, and since then there has been no gap of any considerable length in our constant meetings. Noon after noon he would look in on me during his luncheon hour, and morning after morning he would stop at my door for scarcely more than a minute be-

fore going to his work. He was and he is a man of many vocations and avocations—a professional coach of amateur theatricals, an amateur actor himself, a practitioner of the art of “making up” the faces of actors, a worker in the office of Charles E. Goodspeed, the Boston bookseller, an extra-illustrator of books, an inlayer and mounter of prints, a collector of stage memorabilia, a— But this is intended to be only an abridged list of his manifold activities. An extraordinary man, an accumulator of wealth, you may say? Ah, to the first the answer will be “Yes,” to the second it will be an emphatic “No.” For these arts and crafts of his have brought him a rather precarious income far below the value of his work, because it is so impermanent and seasonal. And also for some years, the interest in his work has sadly declined.

After expedients in trying to earn his living at bill-collecting and other incidental employments, he began to see his way at last towards a gleam of light. He started the practice and mastered the art of extra-illustrating, a dual word that needs explanation. A half-century or so ago Lucius Poole was doing it with some profit to himself in his room in a side street in the South End of Boston. Herbert knew him and by means of a little quiet observation he acquired the technique readily, and from that day to this he has worked at it steadily, although as I have said he is not wealthy—yet.

What is extra-illustrating? It is the making of books by enlarging them with illustrative odds and ends, principally pictures pertinent to the names and events of the text. It is also known as Grangerizing, from the name of the man who first practiced the robbing of many books of their pages in order to consolidate them compactly into a single volume. What Herbert does is to mount pictures or other printed or written material on sheets of the size of the book he is working on, or of a larger size if he wants to increase its dimensions. This operation is performed by inlaying or splitting

the paper so that the new book when completed will lie flat and be no thicker than it is made by the sheets of paper added to it. How does he do it? Well, it is not much of a secret, but Herbert manages the way of it for himself, and so have done a few others who have not his skill or energy. There is no need of my going into the details of a somewhat complex technique.

Herbert Jackson did this sort of work day by day through eighteen years as a salaried employee, but he was finally retired when the profits on his work declined to the vanishing point. In the evening he would also work at home on books for the increase of his personal library, to give to his friends, and for his self-satisfaction. It was a sort of busman's holiday for him. He has had for a long time in his possession a set of Shakspeare's works that he extended to what will be thirty-six volumes when they are bound, and he has also completed many other pieces of extra-illustrative work comparable to that achievement.

Among several examples of his work that he has presented to me is the little life of Edwin Booth written by Professor Charles Townsend Copeland and published in 1901 in the Beacon Biographies series. Every leaf of the original book is increased from  $3\frac{7}{8}$  by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches to  $6\frac{1}{4}$  by  $9\frac{1}{4}$  inches in size, with the thickness of the book enlarged from one-half inch to two inches. Inserted in the book are portraits, play-bills and other appropriate materials dealing with the many matters mentioned in the course of Professor Copeland's life of the famous actor. The book is bound in half red morocco, and has become by means of the gentle art of extra-illustrating an octavo volume. He also made another and much larger extra-illustrated copy of the same book, and this now belongs to Professor Copeland himself. Another specimen of the same kind of work given to me by Herbert Jackson is an extended copy of my biography of Edward Loomis Davenport. All this is, however, not the end of his off-time 'eve-

ning activities. He goes here, there and everywhere within reach of his home in Hyde Park in order to coach or to make up amateur theatrical companies. Those were his very busy days, but their permanent value has been for him the pleasure of their doing. Their substantial worth is very slight.

All this refers to Herbert's professional life, information about which he has given me during our frequent meetings; the rest is personal. He is about six feet tall, which is five inches taller than I, with a shock of pompadour hair that was gray when I first knew him, but that has become almost white with his advancing years. Often while walking along the street he is taken for a Catholic priest, which seems to please him. Like me, he is gifted with a good appetite and a versatile thirst, but unlike me, he lives upon a voluntary special diet that he will never deviate from. He cares not for what to many are the delicacies of the table, in fact he is very much averse to them. Among these are cheese, fat meat, rich gravy and salad dressing. He also dislikes what he calls "German vegetables," which to him mean everything except potatoes, peas, beans and corn, and since the former comprise more than three-quarters of the vegetable section of any menu, his bill of fare is very restricted. But there is no danger of his starving, especially as he is fond of cake and other forms of sweet desserts, and he likes milk, which I abominate. We have always got along very companionably together at the table, whether in a restaurant, in either of our homes, or in the seclusion of my room at the Transcript, where usually twice a week we ended our day's work with our dinner spread before us on my typewriter desk.

For several years we would dine together at the Bell in Hand, an English-style public house in Williams Court, a narrow alley off Washington Street locally known as Pie Alley (not Pi Alley, as it is frequently misspelled), and there we indulged to our hearts' (and stomachs') content in sand-

wiches and mugs of ale of varying strength. It closed in 1920 in forced obedience to the commands of the prohibitionists. Its ancient sign, consisting of an arm and hand holding a bell, with the legend "A.D. 1795" on its base, is now preserved as an historical relic in the rooms of the Bostonian Society in the Old State House. After the closing of this inn we were turned adrift for a short time, but we soon solved our problem by setting up the aforesaid improvised table in my editorial quarters.

Since I left the Transcript, we have gone for a noontide luncheon every Friday in a more pretentious tavern of the same name not far away, and our party has grown in number from two to four, now including our friend Frank S. Ambrose, and another who is equally our friend, Charles S. Warshauer, by whom our meeting hours are enlivened with conversation that gives us occasional glimpses of the law, which happens to be his profession. He rarely speaks of the matter, but he served as a major with the American forces during the World War and thus helped to win the abortive victory over Germany. I am the oldest of this gathering of four, with Frank Ambrose the youngest, and Herbert Jackson and Charles Warshauer midway between.

While I am dwelling on this culinary subject, I must not overlook my record as a patron during fifty years of a favorite "spa" in the newspaper district of downtown Boston, with counters for tables and stools for chairs. During the past decade or so I have been going to the counter presided over by "Molly," and whenever she has been taking a day off and is not there to welcome us, we are disappointed, although we have nothing to say against her competent substitutes. With a half-dozen men of varying employments, we have taken our luncheons there at the rather early hour of quarter past eleven, and we have seemed to form an unorganized club without officers, indulging in happy-go-lucky conversation upon many and varied themes. We would assemble one

after another, and when we drifted out in the same manner it was always with a happy outlook for the coming together the following noon. As is said so frequently, "those were the happy days," and there are still happy days in our lives, and many to come, I hope.

My references to the making of holidays into days of work in my office, instead of remaining at home away from my daily in-town activities, brings to my mind my idiosyncrasies about anniversaries, secular or religious, political or historical, personal or impersonal. I care nothing about the sentimental significance of Good Friday or Christmas, Washington's Birthday or the Fourth of July, and I have never been able to excite myself over the first of January as New Year's Day, for to me every day is the beginning of a new year, even though the number of the year remains unchanged. What especially gladdened me about some holidays was that they offered me the opportunity for a quiet day at the office without interruption by telephone, or by personal visits from anyone. One holiday, however, I always spent at home, and that was Christmas, when I especially enjoyed the customary dinner with family and friends as it was followed by the subsequent festivities during which there was an array of presents notable not especially for their value, but merely as contributions to the gayety of the occasion.

Those holidays at the office enabled me to do a good day's work all by myself in clearing up a large amount of accumulated material, correspondence, newspapers and magazines, ending the day with a dinner in company with my friend Jackson as it was spread on my desk, and then winding up the festivities with an evening at the theatre. Eloquent evidence of Jackson's enjoyment was to be seen by the fact that he had come into Boston from his home in Hyde Park especially for the banquet, and possibly also for the pleasure of my company.



# 63

## *Ten Years on the Radio*

NOW I COME to what was one of the most important and happiest episodes in all my professional life, continuing almost exactly ten years. I have never been, and I have never had the slightest desire to be a public speaker. I have no qualifications for the art, or whatever it may be called, and I congratulate myself that I have declined many invitations to address an audience, even at the risk of being considered discourteous and unaccommodating. I had listened to so many dull talks, speeches and orations that I decided never to make myself obnoxious in that manner. Of course I may have done it in some other way, but why add to those ways?

These ten years cover the period of my broadcasting. My radio talks about books and authors, beginning on June 24, 1927, and ending on April 22, 1937, belong in another category than that of public speaking. I made no personal appearance in them and was conscious of no audience. I should never have entered upon them but for the insistent requests of the Transcript management. My good friend John Cutler, at one time managing editor and for twenty years and more a member of the Transcript staff, was extremely solicitous about my doing these talks. Before and during them, and after I had succumbed to many appeals he was so active in their and my interest that I would jocosely refer to him as

"my manager." For a long time, I gave an advance manuscript of the talks to him, and he wrote the advertisement of them that was published conspicuously every Friday on one of the Transcript pages.

After I had given the fourth talk, John Cutler came to my room quite excitedly one morning, accompanied by Mr. Mandell, and insisted that they be printed verbatim each week in the Transcript; and after a brief discussion as to whether their publication would diminish their appeal over the radio, it was done, and they could be read thereafter as well as listened to. This newspaper printing was in addition to their appearance in a four-page leaflet form, of which several hundred copies were printed each week and distributed to booksellers, publishers and anyone interested in them. That was fortunate for me, for I was able to have them bound in book form, and their three volumes now stand on my library shelves ready for reference or to enable me to recall the past. Occasionally they have furnished me with ideas or material for the writing of subsequent articles, and for freshening my memory during my work on this autobiography.

After I began these talks, requests came to me so frequently to address audiences that I was constantly embarrassed because I was forced to give so many refusals. I was implacable, for as I have said, it has always been my stern determination not to speak in public. Again and again, after I had replied with a polite yet positive no, I was met with the remark, "But you speak over the radio," which I invariably countered with "Yes, but there's a great difference between speaking face to face with an assembly of one hundred or one thousand, or whatever the number may be, and speaking to an invisible audience of an unknown size, and that can leave at will without my knowledge if they are dissatisfied with what I am saying."

If this statement was not understood, when it was made

in personal correspondence or in conversation, I was forced to make a rather elaborate explanation something like this: "In broadcasting in a radio studio, I am simply reading a prepared manuscript, with nobody present and visible except the operator behind a window in the control room, and possibly the announcer near by and a visitor or two in the corridor that overlooks the room." If the announcer leaves the room while I am speaking, as he often does, he returns just in time to "sign me off" after I read my last words. His cue from my lips at the end of the talk was always "Thank you and good afternoon," or "good evening," as the case might be.

Speakers in public frequently say that their first attempts before a microphone are extremely disconcerting because of the silence without a visible audience; but that never happened to me, for I had never had a visible audience. Yet—and here perhaps I am inconsistent—I may say that it was pleasant to be accompanied into the studio by a friend or two, and that I never objected to the presence of the announcer or the operator. In fact, I was never more pleased than at the conclusion of a talk on the Dictionary one afternoon when the operator, John Lawler, and the announcer, John McNamara, who later became program director of WBZ, greeted me with a handshake each, and told me that they had enjoyed immensely what I had said. To please anyone who passes all his working hours in the midst of radio speaking and other programs justifiably filled my heart with pride.

These radio talks continued, with a few intermissions, through ten years, first from the Transcript's own station, WBET, second from WNAC, then affiliated with the Columbia Broadcasting System, and third from WBZ and WBZA, the dual station of the National Broadcasting Company, with studios in Boston and Springfield. I spoke for this last from its studio in the Hotel Bradford on Tremont Street in

Boston. There was an interval of about eight months between my WNAC and WBZ broadcasts during which I wrote the talks as if they had been spoken, and they were published every Saturday in the Book Section of the Transcript, although not broadcast.

This non-broadcasting period began in June, 1931, and continued until the following February, when representatives of WBZ approached George E. Stephenson, then at the head of the Transcript business management, and solicited my weekly appearance on their station as a "sustaining program," which means that there was no charge for my time, and that it was without the backing of a commercial sponsor. Thereafter I had an uninterrupted term under the auspices of the National Broadcasting Company for an unusual length of time, a little over five years, ending in April, 1937. Twice during those months I was called upon for two special broadcasts, one on Poe and the other on Dickens. I also read once from the poems of Robert Frost over station WEEI, and on two afternoons thereafter I gave eight-minute broadcasts on books from a pick-up booth over WORL in the City News Room of the Transcript.

My method of preparing these talks—all set down in type-script before I approached the microphone—was my own, although there was nothing novel or original about it. I could place no reliance upon my memory or notes, for I knew I should be stricken dumb if I went "on the air" with nothing before me from which to read. I began the writing of each broadcast about a week before its delivery. I would assemble my books, my printed and written material of all sorts on my prospective themes, with some odd sheets of blank paper and an assortment of well sharpened pencils within reach of my hand.

I always made my first rough draft with a pencil. I would write hurriedly, knowing that I would make several more rough drafts before the talk was finished to my satisfaction.

Then I would go to my typewriter, and tap off the preliminary talk on the keys, making frequent changes as I went along. That was the second stage of the development of the talk. The third stage came with the resumption of the pencil by which I made interlineations and inserted paragraphs as new ideas came to me for elaboration. Even then I was not through. To the typewriter again, on which I made a fair copy for my reading at the microphone. In fact, I made several fair copies with the aid of carbon paper. With a final re-reading, and perhaps a few extra words here and there, I awaited the hour when I was to make my invisible appearance before my audience.

# 64

## *Response of My Audiences*

DURING ALL THESE YEARS I was the recipient of many questions about my talks, some of them sensible and some nonsensical. Perhaps the most frequent and absurd question was something like this: "How long do you expect it to be before you run out of topics?" or "Pretty soon you won't have anything left to talk about, will you?" These queries implied an impossibility, for they suggested that there was a limited number of books and authors to furnish me with themes. If they were asked casually, I usually responded with a laugh, and a few words of explanation that were not difficult, although I doubt if sometimes my interlocutor saw the point. As long as there are books, as long as there are authors to write them, as long indeed as there is life, and ink and pen and paper, or a typewriter, there will always be books to talk about. There will always be new books—sometimes I think there are too many—but even though there were none, there are always the old books and the old-time authors to discuss. Often I am delighted to talk about them in preference to the latest products of the presses.

Hence the task of selecting topics for my talks was easy. My embarrassment, if any, was in the way of riches. No inspiration, real or fancied, was necessary. My themes came to me: I did not have to seek them. All things in heaven or hell,

on the earth or in the waters of the earth, or in the skies, confronted me for description or discussion, for approval or disapproval. I am here reminded of a story about a Bishop of London who at a public meeting was interrupted, or heckled, as they call it in England, by a constant opponent in his audience. "Do you really believe," queried the interrupter, "that Jonah lived three days and nights in the belly of the whale?" "When I get to heaven I'll ask him," was the quick reply. "But suppose you don't find Jonah in heaven," persisted the tormentor. "Then you can ask him," was the Bishop's final thrust, thus putting an end to the heckling, even if not clinching the argument. Fortunately, there was no chance of a heckler interrupting me as I sat at the microphone. The radio is a one-way invention.

A touch of humor now and then lightened the course of these broadcasting adventures. It began at the very beginning. The morning after my first talk I went up to the Transcript composition room, and was arrested by one of my best friends there with these words: "I heard you last evening, Mr. Edgett, but I couldn't stay until you finished, because I had to leave to go to a prize fight." Another composition-room man, overhearing something said about my broadcasting, remarked in a surprised tone: "Why, are you going on the air, Mr. Edgett?" For days previously I had been advertised in full-page large-type advertisements, with my portrait. Obviously, he did not read the Transcript. One of my reviewers came into my room one morning and said casually: "I heard your broadcast the other afternoon. You had Mr. Redmond for an announcer, didn't you?" I told him he was right, and the words I heard in reply were: "Well, he's good." From another compositor came this: "Your voice on the radio is one hundred per cent better than in ordinary conversation." And this reminds me, if I may say it, that I heard more about my "wonderful voice" than I did about the substance of my talks, so often that the words

"wonderful voice" became a derisive jest in our household.

To broadcast over a long period is to make many friendships, and perhaps a few enmities. I have kept all the letters and post cards I received, and they run far into the thousands, which is not extraordinary in view of the long time I was giving the talks. Sometimes I would be stopped on the street by those I knew, and would be compelled to listen to praise, and also I was occasionally accosted by strangers who appeared to know me by sight. One acquaintance hailed me, and said he thought he had caught me in a mispronunciation and intended to telephone to me about it, but fortunately he looked up the word in the dictionary and found that I was right. The word was "recondite." Now and then I would be cordially greeted at the studio, after I had ended my quarter-hour, by someone who had come there especially to see and hear me. One visitor told me that he found it more enjoyable to look at me through the studio window from the corridor than to receive the talk from the radio set at his club. I was especially gratified to discover that blind men and women found diversion and comfort in listening to me; they would write or telephone me and thereby express their pleasure.

Some memories of listeners persist quite unexpectedly about the broadcasts that are past and gone. Not only do they linger a week or a month, but even now, three years after my last talk about books and authors over the radio, I have my mind brought vividly back to the days between 1928 and 1937 when I was addressing my invisible audience weekly. It is quite exciting and perhaps flattering when either my wife or I encounter someone hitherto unknown to us who asks the question: "You used to broadcast for the Transcript, didn't you?" A man in an office in Cambridge, when I showed him my card, inquired immediately: "You are the Mr. Edgett whom I used to listen to, aren't you?" I was glad to be able to say "Yes." An upholsterer came to see us about repairing a



chair, and upon inquiry as to my profession he told us that his wife had been my regular listener some years ago, and that she regretted the discontinuance of my talks. These are merely two instances among many. So it seems impossible for us to live down our pasts of a more or less public nature.

Occasional illogical objections reached me that were amusing even when they were justified. I remember a letter from a listener in Vermont who rebuked me for confusing the two Sheridans, Thomas the father and Richard the son, with a remark that a teacher should know better. I retorted that it was not impossible for me to err, for I certainly had made a mistake, but that I held no claim to be a teacher. Evidence of the far reach of the radio came to me many times, especially with the visit of a young man who had just returned from London, where he listened to me by means of a short wave set not then very common. He was Arthur Bernon Tourtellot, who later reviewed books for me with exceptional skill. I had a letter from Honolulu saying not that the sender had heard me there, but that he read my talks as they were printed in the Transcript. That gratified me almost as much as if he had received my message directly through the air.

# 65

## *Listening at the Radio*

THERE IS ANOTHER ASPECT of my story of the radio. Not only have I been a radio talker, but I have been and still am a radio listener. My first set was acquired in the June of 1924, just in time to listen to the sessions of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland when Coolidge was nominated for the presidency. At one end is the microphone, the broadcaster, the transmitter and all the control apparatus; at the other end is the receiving set, the antenna and the listener; but we scarcely think of all this when we are hearing the voices and all the other sounds from afar. This first set of mine was so small that it could be carried about in one hand or under the arm; it had two tubes and ran on dry cells and a wet battery, with no loud speaker. Including this first set, I have had six sets in all, and the latest, but not necessarily the last, has fourteen tubes, is connected with the electricity in my home, and therefore needs no batteries for its operation. It stands on the floor, and is so heavy that it requires the united efforts of at least two men to move.

For sixteen years I have therefore enjoyed listening to speaking and musical programs of all sorts until the radio has become a necessity and not a luxury. Of course many programs are a nuisance, but no one is compelled to listen to all of them. There is no entertaining feature of our modern lives

that can be made so selective. You can take them or leave them, as you please, except when through your open windows come their unwelcome sounds. But even these are often avoidable. Some speaking programs are worth hearing, and so also some of the music—the real music, I mean, and not the cacophonous din of swing, jazz and other orchestras led by certain conductors whose names, I regret to say, mean little to me, except as representatives of sounds that are the reverse of sweet. But there is no compulsion to listen to them.

Among my favorite programs are those that bring to me the proceedings of the national political conventions of either party. Sixteen years have passed since the most notable of them, which reminded me of the famous conflict of 1860 of which I have read, when two Democratic candidates were nominated, and another candidate of the short-lived Constitutional Union party provided Abraham Lincoln with three opponents. The famous Democratic split in that year bid fair at one time to be repeated in 1924, but a compromise candidate was nominated who went down in ignominious defeat before Calvin Coolidge. This Democratic convention in 1924 lasted three weeks, and kept me seated at my radio whenever I could tear myself away from my work, and that was often. No fewer than 103 ballots were taken before the Democratic problem was solved, if not necessarily healed. I well remember the impressive, though not convincing, speeches made then by William Jennings Bryan, who holds the honor of having been defeated three times for the presidency. I shall never forget one amusing clause in the party platform of 1924 which consisted of these words: "A vote for Coolidge is a vote for chaos." Whereupon the members of the convention proceeded to have a very merry chaos of their own.

I like also to listen to political campaign and other speeches, and none gave me greater pleasure than Herbert Hoover's during the two contests of 1928 and 1932, and also in all these

years when that great president has been striving to set the country and the world aright out of the disorder into which it has fallen because of the preposterous New Deal. I never listen to the dulcet tones of F. D. Roosevelt, for I do not care to bring into my happy home the overrated voice of its super-exponent.

Sometimes I listen to Sunday sermons, or parts of them, but my chief satisfaction in them is derived from the ease with which I am able to leave the church and its ceremonies without disturbing any other members of the congregation. And it is not only the sermon that reaches my ears; so faithful is the radio that I can hear the swish of the water as the clergyman leads the candidates for membership by immersion into and out of the baptismal font. It brings back to me memories of the days when I was present in a Baptist church at many of those ceremonies, among them being the monthly communion service when the pastor broke up the bread and poured out the wine for delivery by the deacons to the parishioners seated in the pews. I was too young to partake of them myself, and also I was not a church member.

My especial delight in radio music is during the winter months when I listen to the Saturday afternoon performances at the Metropolitan Opera House, which have the added advantage of bringing through to my radio set the notable personality and unmatchable voice of Milton J. Cross as announcer. He adds not a little to the pleasure of those broadcasts. I am a lover of the good old-fashioned melodious operas, usually derided by the latter-day music critics, among them being "Lucia di Lammermoor," "Il Trovatore," "La Traviata," "Rigoletto," "Faust," "Aïda," "Carmen," and "The Barber of Seville." They are genuine and continuous melody, which every opera and every musical composition should be. An opera without melody is as incomplete as a novel that does not tell a story.

Unfortunately music nowadays seems to have fallen from

its high estate, and to be written for its eccentricities instead of for its concord of sweet sounds. I like portions of the Wagner music dramas, notably "Lohengrin," "Tannhäuser," and a part of the first act of "Die Walküre," but I cannot understand the reason for the fulsome laudation of "Tristan und Isolde." Neither do I care for the later Verdi of "Otello" and "Falstaff." By saying all this I suppose I am running the risk of being called an old foggy or a barbarian, but why should I withhold my honest opinion? Some of the modern operas give me a little pleasure, but I am incapable of going into raptures over them. To listen to what one likes over the radio certainly helps to make life worth living. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the broadcasting companies and the radio stations for their entertainment. What if they do intersperse a little advertising in it? But for that we should not be given many of our favorite programs.

# 66

## *Controversial Comment*

IT MAY SEEM STRANGE, but my radio talks upon books and authors brought me into deeper and more emphatic controversies than did any of my formal printed book reviews. That happened, undoubtedly, because of the superior appeal of the human voice, whether these talks were actually heard, or read with the knowledge that they might have been heard. Moreover, they dealt, as do books, with everything within the scope of ideas that inspire the mind to its most vigorous expression. The authors were explicit and positive, and therefore why should I not be the same, since I had the additional vocal advantage? Several themes in the course of my talks were certain to arouse protest and argument in the minds of my listeners to such a degree that they would write to me in the most vehement terms. Therefore, why should I not also be vehement? And I was. Among these controversial themes were politics and religion, the Shakspeare-Bacon delusion, science and dumb animals, especially cats with their many enemies and friends. Chapters could be written of my reaction on all these and other subjects, but I must confine myself to only a few of the episodes that added spice to my life of broadcasting.

Here is one example, and it has to do with history and politics. After looking through a book called by its author

"The Needless War," I stated and emphasized my belief that many wars had been anything but needless. The war to which this writer referred was the Civil War, and I feel I am justified in making a more or less permanent record of my beliefs regarding that specific war and regarding war in general as a means of settling political disputes.

While it is undeniable that war is a terrible, a deplorable and an unsatisfactory method of settling a controversy, it is equally true that as long as man is what he is and what he has been through eons of time, and as long as he has running in his veins the current of the fighting instinct, so long will war and the possibility of war persist. Only with the eradication of this fighting instinct will war cease. That is a consummation as unlikely to be achieved as it is devoutly to be wished. The fact that two men in a prize-fighting ring can gather in these supposed civilized times thousands upon thousands of spectators to watch their brutal and degrading contest is evidence of the prevailing liking for a fight. In view of this tendency, it is no wonder that nations go to war, for nations are nothing more than aggregations of individuals.

It should, I believe, be obvious to anyone who knows the history of our nation that there have been three absolutely necessary wars, if the United States was to arise and endure. These three wars may be described accurately as sacred wars fought in the name of humanity, and they are the Revolutionary War, the Civil War and the World War. The first was the struggle for freedom against the thralldom of England; the second established a solidarity that had long threatened us with disruption until in 1865 it ended for good and all the controversial problems of secession and slavery; the third was a contest to save this country from domination by Germany and its allied powers. It was also fought to save the whole of Europe from the same domination, but unfortunately another war is now in progress over twenty years later for the same object.

None of these statements can be denied by anyone who knows American history. The Revolutionary War was fought by us with the aid of France; the Civil War was fought by the Union alone, in other words by the United States as a whole, and as we were aided by loyal Southerners; the World War was a war in which we were an important and decisive, although belated, factor as the ally of a group of European democratic nations. We entered it not "to make the world safe for democracy," as has been ineptly reiterated many times since that phrase was originated by Woodrow Wilson, but as was inelegantly said by George Harvey, "to save our skins." All these wars were fought in the cause of righteousness, patriotism and eventual peace. To call any of them a "needless war" is to reveal a deep misunderstanding of the forces, the trends and the outcome of human progress. Only in the making of the peace won in the World War did our political representatives go astray. Unhappily, the conquered nations were not forced to realize that they were beaten. It was apparent not long after the treaty was signed that the peace was not to be a lasting peace. The German people and the German government should have been compelled to realize that they were and must remain conquered. Thereby we might have been saved the horrors of further German aggression.

These three wars were all of them as foreordained as they were necessary. Nothing could have prevented them. They had to be waged. Blood had to be spilled, since human nature is what it is. They were absolutely essential wars fought and apparently won. Retreat would have meant dishonor. If the Civil War had not come in 1861, it would have come later. This nation, as Lincoln said, could not endure half slave and half free, and neither could a house stand that was divided against itself. The theory of secession had to be brought to naught; the nation must remain indivisible. The Civil War saved and reestablished the nation. I have been told that I



am in favor of war. I certainly am not, nor have I ever been. I am simply affirming my belief that certain wars have been inevitable in determining the fate of nations.

I may as well at this point touch upon an aspect of the Civil War as it affects a certain participant in it. He was a graduate of the West Point Military Academy, and he served in the United States army until 1861. He had accepted a commission of Colonel in March, and within a few months he was fighting against his country as a General in the Confederate States army. After the failure of his attempt to destroy his country he returned to the ranks of peace and during his last years, which continued only until 1870, he was president of Washington College, later known as Washington and Lee University, at Lexington, Virginia. His name was Robert E. Lee, and there has grown up what may be called the General Lee legend, which seeks to force upon us the idea that, since he was a great soldier and great leader in time of battle, he was therefore a great patriot. He may have been the one; he certainly was not the other, for no man is a patriot who fights against his country.

Twice at least during the years of my radio talks I was attacked with a violence which appeared to indicate that I had no right to speak upon controversial problems in politics or religion, despite the fact that they dominate the human mind. The first of these problems related to Galileo and his fall from grace in the eyes of his church; the second relates to General Lee and his decision that he owed his allegiance first to his native state of Virginia, and then, if at all, to his equally native United States. When I argued in favor of Galileo, I was told in print that I should stick to my literary last and not invade the realms of science and religion. When I remarked calmly yet positively that Lee was a traitor because he deserted and fought against his country after being educated at its expense as a soldier, and serving it thereafter in time of peace and war, I was told that I did not know what I was talking

about. Nevertheless, that is what Lee did and what he was. My exact words were: "During four years he did his utmost to destroy his own country. . . . If General Lee was a patriot, what was Abraham Lincoln? Unless we change the meaning of the word it is impossible for both to be patriots."

The editor of a religious paper (strange indeed, is it not, that it happened to be a paper dedicated to the interests of religion?) answered me in the course of an editorial headed "A Flare-Back to Provincialism and Bigotry." These were his words: "At any rate, when he [Lee] was faced with war between his country and what almost overnight became a foreign power to him and his, Lee stuck by his people and his state." You will note, if you please, that this opponent of mine acknowledges that the United States was Lee's own country, and that he fought against it. My clerical critic's final words were: "But this belated revival of Northern intolerance, dead as a door-nail in any recognized field of scholarship, does not fit in with the breadth and honesty of most of Mr. Edgett's work." Well, I suppose that these last words, "breadth and honesty," were intended to placate me, and possibly change my opinion. But I remain of the same opinion still about Galileo and Lee. These and other controversial matters cheered me during the ten years of my broadcasting about books and authors, and I like to revert to them. I did not expect, and I did not want, commendation and agreement all the time.

Some readers may think that now I am descending from the sublime to the ridiculous, but I am sure I am not doing that when I come to the defense of cats. My letters of praise for what I said about them in my radio talks were many more than my letters of blame. One of the latter sticks in my mind, but I copy it directly from its written pages, which were anonymous, and as will be seen excessively irate. "Cats, beautiful cats," exclaims my correspondent, almost lyrically as well as ironically, "who delight in torturing their victims,

never killing a mouse outright, and are said to deprive a rabbit of one leg at a time, exulting in its misery. I thank God I was never guilty of keeping one of these animals under my roof." Now, whether this be truthful or not, it is not fair. Cats are as God made them, and so is man as God made him. If cats are cruel, so is man cruel, abominably cruel, a thousand times more cruel than cats. Man is cruel to his fellow man as well as to animals. And man is supposed to have the advantage of the soul that it is customary to deny to animals. Do not men hunt in the woods, shoot animals and allow them to die by inches amid the utmost torture? Do not men catch animals in traps? Do not men hook fish and allow them to gasp for breath, and all in the name of sport? Why should cats be denounced for doing what men do in immeasurably greater degree? There seems to be no logic in the minds of these cat-haters, whether the cats be of the petted household variety, or the tigers and lions of the forest. All this is from the heart, for during many years we have had the companionship of one lovable cat, and sometimes more than one.

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## *Another of My Actor Friends*

LONG BEFORE THE DAYS when I came to know him, George W. Wilson succeeded William Warren as leading comedian of the Boston Museum stock company, and he remained with that organization the greater part of the time until its disbandment in the late nineties, after I had become the Transcript literary editor. He then looked in on me to say good-bye and to thank me for the generous treatment he had received from my predecessors in that position. He was about to leave Boston to travel at the head of his own company for a few seasons. I had seen him act many times in the wide range of characters that had fallen to his lot on the Museum stage, and had greatly admired him across the footlights. It was a long time thereafter that our personal friendship began. He was then passing his last years in retirement, and his life would have been lonesome indeed without occasional contact with the many Bostonians who remembered him well at the height of his popular favor when the Boston Museum was an influential factor in the theatrical life of the city.

From time to time, from the outset of our acquaintance, he would look in to see me at the Transcript. He was always welcome, no matter how busy I was. Going up to the WNAC studio for my weekly broadcast one evening, I was surprised to see him seated there awaiting me. He had come to listen

to me there instead of relying upon a receiving set, and thereafter I was almost certain of having him with me every week. At first he listened in the outer room reserved for guests; but the conversation there annoyed him so much that he was given permission to sit near me in the broadcasting room. When I had finished my quarter-hour we would leave the studio together, and journey downtown from the WNAC rooms in Governor Square by way of the subway, I to go home and he to take in one of the theatres at which he had the entree.

His eyesight was extremely defective, and I would hold him back by the arm to prevent his dashing recklessly across the street in the face of the automobile traffic. At last the fatal hour came, and on a Monday morning I read at the breakfast table that he had been knocked down by a taxicab the previous evening and taken to the hospital. I visited him there in the short interval before death came with its happy release. Survival with its inevitable incapacitation would have been a terrible fate. His funeral service on a Saturday afternoon just before Christmas in the chapel of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, where Edwin Booth, Charlotte Cushman and other famous ones of their profession lie, was well intentioned, but I know through my conversations with him that he would have been upset by its ritualistic formalities.

One of George Wilson's favorite remarks in his old age, as he reverted to the days when he had been an actor of great popularity in his wide local fame, was "And what has it all amounted to!" uttered more as an exclamation than as a question, for he was by no means a confirmed pessimist. He was not always in a melancholy mood, although he had a right to be, for his young wife had died early in their married life, and a daughter who had begun with high hopes of a promising professional career in music was attacked by melancholia when young and was shielded from the outside world

in a sanitarium in suburban Boston, where he visited her faithfully and regularly during long years. Most of his friends knew about this sorrow in his life, but he never mentioned her to me, the only inkling I received of it being an occasional remark: "I had a duty to perform yesterday." She lived to attend his funeral, but died not long afterwards.

No actor I have known was more cordial in his appreciation of his contemporaries. He never referred to Edwin Booth, with whom he had acted, except in terms of highest praise, almost of veneration, and he fairly idolized the memory of William Warren both as actor and as man. To him the name of Warren was synonymous with the highest ideals of the stage, and all the practices of the acting art. Their association at the Boston Museum had been long and close, and he always looked back upon their relation as that of master and pupil. It was an honor to him to bask in the sunshine of the older actor's fame.

His conversation was always sprightly, and as with all actors it was filled with reminiscences of the stage, upon which he had been active for more than half a century. He came of a family opposed to the theatre, and he told me that neither his father nor his mother had ever seen him act. Among his many stories were two about Edwin Booth. During a rehearsal of "Othello" when the star was acting Iago and he was the Roderigo, the question arose as to where he should stand in a certain scene. "Never mind," said Booth, "where you are. I can find you anywhere." There was a performance of "Richelieu" in a Boston theatre at which a number of Harvard students were appearing as "supers." The great cardinal of Louis XIII was consumptive, it will be remembered, and his occasional cough was an important part of the stage business. One of the "supers" had the impertinence to knock at Booth's dressing room door during an intermission, and upon its opening asked him: "Mr. Booth, how do you do that cough so realistically?" "How would you do it?" asked

the actor, whereupon the student made a resounding and raucous noise. At once Booth exclaimed, "What could be better than that?" and shut the door without apology. In Booth's support one season there was an actor named Bates whom for some reason the star disliked intensely, and when the tour ended, Booth was told by his manager that the company would like to see him for a moment to say farewell. "I appreciate the courtesy," was the reply, "and I am glad to take your farewells for granted, but leave me Bates." In addition to all this, whenever I was with George, there was much of importance he had to say to me about plays, characters and the stage in general.

One afternoon he came into my office, and said: "Theodore Johnson of Walter H. Baker Company, the play publishers, has a wonderful manuscript autobiography by Mildred Aldrich that I am sure you will want to read, and that he will be glad to lend to you. Why don't you go up to his office and take it home for leisure reading?" As is customary with me, I carelessly deferred the suggested trip, and then one day soon afterwards he appeared with a huge package in his arms. It was the Mildred Aldrich manuscript, which he was determined I should read. I took it home, kept it about a month, reading it from beginning to end, enthralled not only by Miss Aldrich's vivacious telling of her own story, but by its reminiscent qualities that gave me a series of glimpses of my own bygone days. Finally I returned it to Mr. Johnson, who told me that he was going to try to get a publisher for it, but that at any rate he would have it bound. The search for a publisher was unavailing, but the manuscript is now bound in four volumes and will some day be installed as Mr. Johnson's gift to a receptive library. It is worth keeping there, since it cannot be preserved in printed book form. Not long ago Mr. Johnson took me over one floor of his two-floor establishment in an office building on Tremont Street, and if there is a greater number of printed plays anywhere else in

the world I do not know where they can be. The firm of which Mr. Johnson is the head dates back to 1845.

Who, you may ask, is Mildred Aldrich? The old-time Bostonian, especially if he was connected with newspapers or theatres in the last years of the nineteenth century, will remember her, but I fear she is unknown to the younger generation that thinks little of the past. This story of Miss Aldrich's life, which she entitled "The Autobiography of a Breadwinner," is the chronicle of a woman who was born in Providence in 1856, who lived and worked in Boston as a school teacher, a newspaper writer and editor, and who in search of wider fields to conquer left for Europe in 1898, settled in Paris and never returned to her native land. While in Paris she served as representative for Julia Marlowe, E. H. Sothorn, James K. Hackett and other leading American players. She wrote several little books, among them, "On the Edge of the War Zone," "The Peak of the Load," "Told in a French Garden," "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," and "A Hilltop on the Marne." The titles of these books bring to my mind the ironic fact that, weary of the ceaseless tumult of Parisian life, Miss Aldrich took a small place in the little village of Huiry on the outskirts of the French capital, retired there in quest of peace and quiet, and within a short time the World War broke out, and the German army was within sight of her door! But it got no further, and as we know, it did not reach Paris. She received a decoration from the French government for her services during the war and later her home in Huiry was established as a memorial in her honor through the efforts of Gertrude Stein and other friends.

During her early days in Boston, Miss Aldrich had been a contributor to and editor of the Boston Home Journal, a writer on the theatre successively in the Boston Journal and the Boston Herald, a personal friend of many visiting players, including Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, editor and writer of the entire contents of a little magazine she called The



Mahogany Tree, a title reminiscent of Thackeray. As I have good reason to remember, she contributed an illustrated monthly article about actors to a rather obscure little publication, *The Nickell Magazine*. I was visited by its publisher one day in the late nineties, told by him that Miss Aldrich was leaving Boston to make her home in France, and that she had referred him to me to ask if I would replace her on his staff. I consented, did the work for him for a year or so, and added a small amount of money to my income. Then I too deserted Boston for Europe, but I did not stay as long as Miss Aldrich.

Although Miss Aldrich and I knew each other by reputation, we never met. But I had heard of her in a way she never knew. In my early boyhood, I lived in a house on Sherman Street in Roxbury, and in its other half was a family of the name of Aldrich. Years after that, when I had grown up, my father, who had seen her name as a signature to articles in the Boston papers, said to me: "I wonder if this Mildred Aldrich is the Milly Aldrich who lived in the other half of our house on Sherman Street." I confessed my ignorance, merely saying it was possible; but after many more years, as I was reading her manuscript autobiography, I came across her reference to her home on Sherman Street, in a "semi-detached villa." And so she was the Milly Aldrich of my boyhood—some ten years older than I, however.

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## *Writing Book Reviews*

IF I AM ASKED to describe my method of book reviewing, I invariably respond, somewhat paradoxically, that I have no method, and then I proceed to describe and explain it. I am sure there are no hard and fast rules, however, for that form of writing. To my mind, the words "book review" merely signify a description of the contents of a book, a statement of what may fairly be considered to be the author's aim and achievement, and a critical appraisal of his work. Any review of a book may be made up of all three of these elements, or two of them, or sometimes of only one element. A plan obviously to be avoided is to give a bare outline of the plot of a novel. There is nothing more unfair than that to the novelist, and nothing more uninteresting to the reader. Whether a book review is a piece of hack work, as it sometimes may be called, depends wholly upon the skill of its writer.

All the phases of good writing should go into a book review, as they should also be a part of the substance of any literary form. The rhetoricians tell us that the three essentials of writing are clearness, force and elegance. While some of the rules of rhetoric seem to be superfluous, and not to be followed with unabated rigor, this triple rule is as imperative as were reputed to be the ancient laws of the Medes and Persians. Each of them must be kept foremost in the mind of

any writer, whether he be writing for publication or a letter to a friend—or enemy. If he is not understood, for what purpose is he writing? If he is obscure, he might as well not be writing at all. He might better be engaged in some mechanical labor of any kind, running a donkey engine, cleaning up the cellar or attic, or hoeing in the garden, if the season be willing.

The writing of a book review may be an inspiring piece of work both for its writer and for its reader, especially if the writer remembers he is conveying to the reader a definite amount of information about something useful. If you have been successful in the writing of a review, or of anything pertaining to books and authors, you have passed on what may be useful and usable knowledge. You may have led someone to look carefully into a worth-while book upon an important subject. You have thereby followed a literary high-road and have blazed a literary bypath. You will be glad if you have increased anyone's desire for reading and have led anyone to see that a book may create or fulfill a passion for broadening an acquaintanceship with its purpose and have stimulated his progress into the heart of allied themes.

It is the theory and practice of some men who work on daily papers with their eyes fixed on the passing show of human events to claim that a book review is primarily and essentially news. I contend emphatically that it is not. It may contain an element of news, and is therefore just as effective a month or more after it is published as on the day of publication. In fact, an old book is often more alluring and informative than a new book. This thesis of books as news was a handicap to me during my last days on the Transcript. But whatever or whenever you write a review you should not let the reader know so much about the book that there will be nothing more for him to learn from its pages. Years ago there used to be a full-page review of only one book in each suc-

cessive issue of a leading New York Sunday newspaper. That was altogether too much.

One of the most famous of all British authors is Macaulay. He was more than an author; and he remains more than an author. He was a statesman and a man of public affairs who was also a biographer, an essayist, a poet and a book reviewer. His strongest hold upon his readers is as an adherent to the first law of clearness. In that respect Carlyle and others pale into insignificance. What are his essays? They are nothing more nor less than expanded and glorified book reviews, such as no one other than he could write. His style is clarity itself. It is so clear that some purists condemn it because it is commonplace. In some of his essays—those for instance on Lord Clive and Warren Hastings, on Milton and Fanny Burney—he gives much more than can be found in the books he took for his texts. He followed them out of his studies of their lives and works, and he produced what is really a series of biographical chronicles of their purposes and achievements. He has been condemned for expressing his opinions vehemently, and sometimes his prejudices emphatically, but why not? He thereby makes himself vivacious, vividly interesting and informative. While you are reading his essays you forget entirely that he is writing about a book or books, and see only the man or woman he is portraying, or the events he is describing. His is the best type of book reviewing.

Although Macaulay has doubtless proved an inspiration to a multitude of students and professional writers, it is true that he is not now the idol he continued to be for many years. He has been thrown down from his pedestal by authorities and revolutionaries of English style; or rather they have sought to displace him. It is now the fashion to decry and sneer at him. No one can deny the power and the ease as well as the clearness of his English methods, but many are now deriding him because he was unfortunate enough, in their eyes, not to

possess the eccentricities of thought and expression that have become the vogue since the beginning of the twentieth century. Many also are arguing that because he was a Whig his historical and critical writings had only a temporary partisan interest, and that their energy has departed and their atmosphere evaporated with the passing of the persons and activities of his political hour. Furthermore, they are accusing him of persistent and careless inaccuracy in many of his historical statements and inferences, and sometimes they are right. But what historian is wholly right? Few are they whose views of fact are not obscured by their opinions. There always seems to me to be an undercurrent of spite and dislike in all this Macaulayan censure.

Since Macaulay was a partisan, it is natural that he should be attacked by his opposing partisans. For partisanship is always a matter of give and take, with a great deal to be said on both sides of the argument. Throughout his life, from his university days onward, and especially from his entrance into the political world at the age of thirty until his death at fifty-nine, he was continuously a target of assaults from Tory tongues and the Tory press. He began writing for the *Edinburgh Review* when he was in his twenties, and always thereafter he was the object of violent attacks, mainly for his positive expression of his opinions, especially on political subjects. But in his personal character there was nothing that even his most venomous enemies could seize upon.

The statesmanship, the speeches, the essays, of Macaulay, even the great history of England, were all belittled, but never the man himself. Gladstone, the great Liberal of Macaulay's day and of a later era, has thus described him by the question and answer method: "Was he envious? Never. Was he servile? No. Was he indolent? No. Was he prodigal? No. Was he audacious? No. Was he selfish? No. Was he idle? The question is ridiculous. Was he false? No, but true as steel, and transparent as crystal. Was he vain? We hold that

he was not. At every point in the ugly list he stands the trial; and though in his history he judges mildly some sins of appetite or passion, there is no sign in his life, or in his remembered character, that he was compounding for what he was inclined to." In every respect, in Gladstone's judgment and in the judgment of many others, his was the best type of mind for book reviewing. Whether we look upon him as man or as writer, he was one whose example should be followed even by those who have neither his ability in writing, nor his knowledge and his skill in command of the entire circle of knowledge.

*When Authors Disclose Themselves*

IT IS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE for a reviewer to have a sense of style, both in himself and in others. He should have a feeling for its intricacies, and an ability to make it a personal characteristic of his own writing. By style the author reveals himself, his habit of thought, his views of life and mankind, the aspect of the past or the future in which he is most strongly interested. When one author resembles another, we are inclined to say, somewhat rashly and somewhat inconclusively, that he is a second Addison, a second Lamb, a second Ruskin, a second Dickens, a second Thackeray, a second Trollope, or a second anyone else who happens to come to mind. Of course none of these is anything of the sort. The statement is merely critical hyperbole. It convinces no one, least of all him who makes it, or ourselves if we happen to make it. We know perfectly well that the stronger a writer's essential personality, the more definitely he is himself in everything that goes to the making of style, and the more impossible it is for him to have an imitator or successor.

No English writer was so thoroughly himself as Dickens, and few have been made the victims of so many unjustifiable comparisons. He has had many imitators, both conscious and unconscious, but in none of them is to be found a single spark of his genius. He might be imitated at his worst, but

not at his best. The writer who aped him was too flagrantly and clumsily an imitator who was trying to do the impossible. Dickens remains, as do all writers of his rank, original and unique. If he had chosen anonymity, for the sake of a diversion after his fame had become established, he would certainly have unintentionally made himself known, and have been none other than the Dickens he was.

Later and more modern writers than Dickens have sought this very device of anonymity or pseudonymity, and have failed, since it is impossible for any writer to fail to maintain his identity. Could Kipling, or Barrie, or Shaw, or Galsworthy hide himself? Each was always self-revelatory. No one doubted, for instance, from the first that the author of "George Meek, Bath Chairman" and of "Boon" was H. G. Wells, despite his assertion that he was merely the introducer of those books to the public. He has always been a prolific writer, but he saw that there was danger in being too prolific. Why not appear in another guise? And he did it. There are others of lesser eminence than Wells who have sought and have not found to their complete satisfaction how sweet are the uses of anonymity. When Arthur Christopher Benson, one of the three writing members of the family headed by an Archbishop of Canterbury, tried to conceal his identity as the author of "The Upton Letters" he was found out.

Internal evidence, all the immutable elements in writing that proclaim forcefully what we call style, revealed him as their author. He tried it again with "Father Payne," but again he failed and was unable to deceive his readers by the putting forth of an anonymous title page. It required no inordinate amount of acumen to discover that Benson was the author of "Father Payne." I recognized him in its pages, and so did others. I said so in a review at the time the book was published, and he was frank enough to write me that he was not at all surprised at my penetration into his secret. All that was necessary for this discovery was a familiarity with one



or more books of his in which he mingled reflective essays and calm fiction, and there was the literary manner of Arthur Christopher Benson. He tried this device more than once, and thereby he learned the significance of the word "style" and all that it represents. And so did we who read him.

*A Sea Captain Becomes a Novelist*

ALL THIS ABOUT STYLE certainly leads in the direction of Joseph Conrad. With him the style was certainly the man and author. I wonder how many liked his novels because of that intricate style, and how many disliked them for the same reason. For his style I disliked him, and by that confession I know my good taste will be questioned. Some readers and reviewers worship the authors they like this side idolatry. With them, Joseph Conrad seems to have been capable of doing no wrong. Even though he be dead, he liveth in their minds, and they spring eagerly to his defence.

When an orchestra of reviewers is playing a symphony of harmonious sounds with the greatness of Joseph Conrad as its theme, it may seem injudicious to destroy its concord by the addition of one dissonant instrument. As novel after novel by him appeared, the music grew louder and louder in the ears of the public, and sweeter and sweeter in the ears of the author. It may be venturesome to voice even a single discordant note, but what is to be done when one whose duty it is to read and write about him feels sure that he should neither pipe the shrill piccolo nor boom the double bass of rapt appreciation and adulation?

From his birth state of Poland, and out of his qualifications as a mariner, Joseph Conrad brought something new

into English fiction, and into the romantic tales of the sea. There is no doubt of that. But his relation to his fellow novelists is simply one of contrasts. He devised for himself a style of phrasing and story construction that was wholly his own, and he neither imitated nor was imitated. In fact, I suspect that none of his fellow novelists wanted to imitate him.

It is impossible that Conrad can be everything that has been said of him by his admirers. The resources of the English language have been almost exhausted by remarks about his greatness as revealed from "Almayer's Folly" to "The Rover." "Wizardry," "magic" and "power" among nouns, and "superb," "incomparable," "magnificent," "wondrous" and "perfect" among adjectives, are but a few of the words wrested from the dictionary wherewith to describe him. Not even Kipling was so highly acclaimed, and yet Conrad was a very human writer who revealed his shortcomings and inconsistencies as often as he revealed his skill.

To look in retrospect, for instance, at "The Rover," is to see exactly what anyone who knows Conrad of old would expect to see. It remains a good story badly told, and that seems to be worse than a bad story well told. It discloses again the fact that its author, after a quarter-century of writing fiction, had not learned the rudiments of his art. Its time-sequence is utterly inexplicable. Its action shifts backwards and forwards, lags and halts so frequently that the reader many times is unable at first thought, and sometimes not at all, to discover whether any one event comes before or after its successor in the course of the narrative. Conrad seems to have no sense of coherence or of the dramatic value of a logical course of incidents. He befuddles the reader so often that we are forced to think that he is himself in a constant bewilderment over an entangled plot from which he is unable to extricate himself.

It is said of some people that they cannot see the wood for the trees. That seems to be the state of mind of the Conrad

idolaters. They cannot see him as he is in the midst of all his detail. But of course to the true Conradians, their god can do no wrong. The primary object of a novelist is to make himself understood, but more often than not Conrad is unintelligible. Another of his failures is to make fiction appear as fact. This may be found in "The Nigger of the *Narcissus*," where he protracts the progress of a storm to a length of pages and pages of narrative and description that transcend all possibilities on sea or land. Before the storm subsides, the story becomes simply a repetition of unbelievable freaks of nature.

The fact that to many critical eyes this verdict of mine will appear to be literary heresy of the basest kind does not cause me to waver in my view of him. I am the more content because the furore over him is waning. Dickens and Thackeray are as alive as they were in the days when they were writing. But is Joseph Conrad? I doubt it. He holds a place more as an antique than as an author who, though dead, still lives. In the days gone by I could never read one of his novels without the persistent feeling that the mental strain was not worth the effort. I was compelled to force myself to read him to the end. More than once I would lay down the book with impatience. Perhaps now the non-Conradians are in the ranks of the majority. If so, I am with them.

In view of what I have just said, the following letter seems to show that he was gifted in the science of heaping coals of fire upon one's head. In my collection of authors' letters is a small card that looks very English with its embossed address: "Capel House, Arlestone, Nr. Ashford, Telegrams: Conrad, Hamstreet. Station Hamstreet, S. E. R. & C. Ry." Its writer was apparently determined that no one who was looking for him might go astray. The card contains a pleasant message, and the year of its writing is 1915. It reads:

DEAR SIR:

The first intimation of *Victory* being published came to me through the review in your distinguished paper. The fact could

not have been conveyed to me in a more pleasant manner. Thank you very much for the friendly thought. Pray express to my reviewer my very deep sense of his generous appreciation of my work and believe me, with great regard,

Yours Faithfully,

JOSEPH CONRAD.

This is very queer, and I wish I could have access to the review that pleased Mr. Conrad so mightily. Once in a while I did write a favorable review of one of his novels, and perhaps by chance this was the one time. Or possibly I was ironical in my writing of it, and he could not read between the lines. At any rate, I am glad I pleased him, and of course I made haste to express to my reviewer Mr. Conrad's "very deep sense of his generous appreciation." It was not difficult for me to do that, for I am quite sure that I myself was the reviewer in question.

## *Impressions of Thomas Hardy*

IT IS A WELCOME CHANGE to end my activities as a dissident. I now go to Thomas Hardy, who has grown in his reputation as a great novelist ever since that fateful day when he renounced the writing of novels for poetry. To be sure, he had dabbled in verse all the years of his novel writing, but he was nevertheless a persistent teller of tales and a novelist. I have always looked upon him from that point of view, and never think now of him except as a novelist. He had been my literary idol ever since I first read one of his novels—I do not remember which one it was—and it was a sad day for me and for many others when he announced his decision that with “Jude the Obscure” no more fiction would come from him. This vow was not literally carried out, but it was substantially justified.

However, Hardy could not take away from us the novels that he had already written. There are fourteen of them, in addition to six volumes of his short stories. By general consent, six of his novels may be set down without fear of contradiction as his masterpieces. In the order of their publication they are “Far from the Madding Crowd” (published in 1874), “The Return of the Native” (in 1878), “The Mayor of Casterbridge” (in 1886), “The Woodlanders” (in 1887), “Tess of the D’Urbervilles” (in 1891), and “Jude the Ob-

scure" (in 1895). All these I have read, and also every one of Hardy's novels and volumes of short stories, several times during the past forty years, and I hope to find the time to read each of them at least once more.

The last of these novels, "Jude the Obscure," which ended his career in prose fiction, had been in his mind for about ten years. It was written in outline several times, and was published in abridged form serially in Harper's Magazine beginning in November, 1894, with book publication the next year. It had two prior tentative titles, "The Simpleton" and "Hearts Insurgent." Thereupon, disappointed and disheartened at the critical assaults and the personal attacks upon himself, he gave up the struggle, and at once gained a secondary reputation as a poet. Despite the verdict of some authorities that his poetry is superior to his prose fiction, I continue to stand with the many who hold to their faith in his preeminence as a novelist.

It is well known that Hardy had a definite, if not a satisfactory, reason for abandoning his career as a novelist, when he was less than fifty-five years of age. The pity of it is that he was unable to withstand the attacks upon him, unwilling to rise in his might and scorn those readers and critics who condemned him for writing "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure." It is almost impossible for us of today to understand now, so long afterwards, what all the furious opposition to these two novels was about. They discuss sex problems with the most serious, the most judicious, the sternest and the most tragic intent, and there is no doubt as to the sincerity of their author's firm artistic purpose in their writing, and of his desire to make them transcriptions of actual life as he saw and studied it. He knew he was right, and it seems strange that he succumbed to those who claimed to be his judges. The courageous attitude for him was to go on with his work as though no one were opposing it.

What happened forms a dramatic and tragic episode in

English literary history. It began in full cry with "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and it became intensified with increased fury with "Jude the Obscure." It might be imagined from what was written about both these novels and their author that he had descended into the depths of moral depravity. "The onslaught upon 'Jude,' " wrote Mrs. Hardy, "started by the vituperative section of the press, was taken up by anonymous writers of libellous letters and post cards, and other such gentry. It spread to America and Australia, whence among other appreciations he received a letter containing a packet of ashes, which the virtuous writer stated to be those of his iniquitous novel." \* An American reviewer wrote: "What has happened to Thomas Hardy? I am shocked, appalled by the story. It is almost the worst book I ever read. I thought that 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' was bad enough, but that is milk for babes compared to this. It is the handling of this that is the horror of it. When I finished the story, I opened the windows and let in the fresh air, and I turned to my bookshelves and said: 'Thank God for Stevenson and Kipling, Barrie and Mrs. Humphry Ward. Here are four great writers who have never trailed their talents in the dirt.'" Such puerile nonsense as this reflects not upon Thomas Hardy, but upon its writer.

Hardy's own explanation of, not an apology for, the writing of "Jude the Obscure" is brief and to the point. "For a novel addressed by a man to men and women of full age," he wrote, "which attempts to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, derision and disaster, that may press in the wake of the strongest passion known to humanity and to point, without a mincing of words, the tragedy of unfulfilled aims, I am not aware that there is anything in the handling to which exception can be taken. Like former productions of this pen, 'Jude the Obscure' is simply an endeavor to give

\* From "The Later Years of Thomas Hardy," by Florence Emily Hardy. By permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.



shape and coherence to a series of seemings, or personal impressions, the question of their consistency or their discordance, of their permanence or their transitoriness, being regarded as not of the first moment." \*

Despite the general regret over his decision, Hardy never faltered. During his thirty years thereafter he wrote nothing in prose but a few short stories that were gathered into a book under the title of "A Changed Man," its opening tale. His novel, "The Well Beloved," although published after "Jude the Obscure," was written several years earlier. Once Hardy had cast off the mantle of the novelist, he went along sturdily and to wide approval in the garb of poet, embodying readily all his philosophical ideas of man and life in verse. Perhaps he was surprised to find that the critical world was so willing to accept him in that role. His method had changed, but he was nevertheless the same Hardy in his mental outlook upon mankind, its present, past and future. His poetry as it later appeared at frequent intervals represented work that dated as far back as 1865. "The Dynasts," the drama that is considered by some to be his greatest poem, if not literary work, is in its way a novel, chaotic and discursive in form, but nevertheless as much a work of historical fiction as any of his prose novels.

\* From "Jude the Obscure," by Thomas Hardy. By permission of Harper & Brothers, publishers.

*With Eden Phillpotts of Dartmoor*

LOOKING THROUGH THE INDEX to the three bound volumes of my radio talks *About Books and Authors*, I discovered that I had said something about Eden Phillpotts's work and the man himself thirty times, which is no more than they deserve. Probably I referred to no other author as often, with the exception of Shakspeare and Dickens. This indicates the large number of his novels that came from the press in that period, and also my interest in an author with whom I have been in occasional correspondence ever since the receipt of my first letter from him about thirty years ago.

It has always seemed to me that anyone who reads with pleasure the fiction of Thomas Hardy should read with equal pleasure the fiction of Eden Phillpotts, although the books of the one are few and the books of the other are many. Of the admiration of the younger novelist—their birth dates are twenty-three years apart—for the older there is no doubt, for I have ocular evidence of that before me in the felicitous dedication of his "Old Delabole," published in 1915: "To Thomas Hardy, in Honour of His Unapproachable Art and with Affection for His Most Approachable Self." More than that, however, is contained in a letter written to me by Mr. Phillpotts in September, 1920, from his home in Torquay, whence he removed some years ago to another

Devonshire residence in Exeter, a short distance inland from the far-famed seashore resort on the shores of the English Channel. After a few opening sentences it continues thus:

. . . In England I am only counted as a faint echo of Mr. Hardy, and the stupid reviewers do not see the gulf between. To compare small things with great is always mistaken, but my taper is not lighted at the same source as his Sun. He believes in some Conscious Existence overmastering all things; as a result he is logically a pessimist; while I, as a rationalist, recognize nothing of the sort and my philosophy, such as it is, breeds hope for man's future and optimism and belief in evolution of morals. I wrote "Lying Prophets" and "Children of the Mist" before ever I read a line of Hardy and should have been exactly what I am whether he had written or no. But one is under no illusions. I am only a respectable and modest artist, who uses his limited gifts to the best of his power. He is a very great genius, blessed with a magnificent brain and a power of synthesis given to very few. . . .

I do hope, dear Edgett, that some day you are going to visit England and give me an opportunity to declare my friendship and my sense of the loyal kindness you have shown me and my modest works. It will be a great pleasure when you do.

Always sincerely yours,

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

As an exhibit of the literary activity of Eden Phillpotts I am able to set down from his own statement in a letter to me the total number of his books as more than two hundred. A majority of these have been published in this country as well as in England, his most frequent scenes being the fields, forests, hills and towns of Dartmoor. In addition to his novels he has also written books of poetry and essays, plays, fables based on ancient Roman and Greek mythology, and tales of mystery such as "The Grey Room" and "The Red Redmaynes." Although these latter are in their artistic qualities inferior to his more important novels, they are superior in their kind to the vast modern array of popular mystery fiction, and are worthy of standing beside the similar

work of Wilkie Collins and Conan Doyle. But I am sure I shall be doing no injustice to him when I say that it would have been better for his reputation had he not been so prolific in his literary energies.

This letter from him touches upon that point:

KERSWELL, BROADCLYST  
EXETER, ENGLAND

14 June, 1937

My dear Friend

An unknown American reader has sent me the press cutting of a speech or radio talk delivered by you in January last on my little volume of *Sonnets* and I am greatly touched by the extraordinary kindness you continue to show me. No publisher will print my poetry in U.S.A. and so my "100 Sonnets" and "100 Lyrics" have not seen the light there and indeed any of my longer poems.

One error you make: I have written two hundred works—nothing to boast about you'll say, but so it is. The spirit continues to be willing and I have many more stories to tell than I shall have time to write. But in sight of seventy-five years the physical power and the brain concentration needful in creative work begin to play tricks with you.

You will like my last quiet little book of the folk entitled "Wood Nymph," but it is not noisy enough for these times.

I hope you are strong and well yourself and destined to pursue your adventures in letters for many long years.

Always gratefully yours

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Of the truth of the Phillpotts novels to the life and scene they depict, there is no doubt. By reading them we learn much that we never should have known about southwestern England; and we have marvelled at the skill with which fiction is combined with fact. They characterize the life with which they deal, and they portray also the world at large. Because of these novels I have never wanted to see a foreign land as I want to see Dartmoor, with the possibility of

Pitcairn Island as an exception to this desire. But neither journey can I hope to take. Here is Mr. Phillpotts's analysis of his artistic reaction to his scene:

TORQUAY, ENGLAND

24 April, 1923

MY DEAR EDGETT,

Thanks to you I get from time to time a glimpse of the critical attitude in America, which is always interesting; but to a serious artist, who never satisfies himself, the fact that he may please or displease others is equally unimportant. The New York Times critic errs at one question and states, as though it were a fact, something that is not true.

I do not invent my characters in my study—first because that would be as impossible to me as describing Dartmoor from my study, and secondly because that would in my judgment be absurdly dishonest. It may very well be that I create this impression through faulty art and inefficient handling; but I go for my characters where they belong, and that's Dartmoor. Had the critic known amply of me personally, or my methods of work, he might still have said what he says; but not in those untruthful terms. He has every right to say I fail of presentation and I agree with him; but the people are observed and studied, not invented, and were my powers of observation keener and my art finer, this would doubtless be more apparent than it is. For the rest I expect he's a keen Christian, and religious predilections do vitiate so much criticism unfortunately.

Once again I thank you for your great and much valued kindness to me. I delight to hear from you and much hope some day you may make the journey to England and give me the keen pleasure of your personal acquaintance. I have still a kick left and a dozen books asking to be written, but "the night cometh" and vitality wanes.

Your friend,

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Many of Eden Phillpotts's novels reveal him in the simple and unpretentious garb of a writer of books who seeks to be nothing more than a "teller of tales"—a designation, it will be remembered, of which Stevenson was especially proud.

In novel after novel he sets his scene, introduces his characters, weaves his plot and entertains us with a logical and coherent story. He invites us to solve no problems, he solves no problems for us. There is abundant drama in his stories, but it is simple and unforced drama; there is comedy in them, but it is a quiet and unexaggerated comedy. We are left in no doubt as to the inmost feelings and emotions of his personages.

He prefers to write in the mood and manner of the storytellers of the days gone by when no one thought of praising a novelist because he wrote as one inspired with a divine mission to reform a portion of mankind, or at least to instruct the world by means of his fiction. He plunges us deeply into the ways of men and women and into the vagaries of the human heart. He shows us the wisdom with which the able novelist may look upon life as it is disclosed to him in the scene that lies before his eyes. For him that life has been the life of Dartmoor; any other life might have been the same to him, if it had been the place where he made his home for many years. He is a novelist who writes with his eyes firmly fixed on what confronts him.

# 73

## *Gissing the Romantic Realist*

ANOTHER OF MY FAVORITE NOVELISTS is George Gissing, realist and romanticist who endured for a long time a life of great hardship. Before he was well along towards his middle years he had descended into the valley of the shadow of death. His own story is as romantic and as realistic as any novel he wrote, and he was the author of many novels. He was born in 1857, and it is difficult to realize that he would now be only eighty-three, an age to which many poets and prose writers have survived. He is the product of another era than this in the history of literature. Through his youth and early manhood he trod the weary pathways of moral trials and physical tribulations; but he eventually emerged from them victorious.

In his early days, when he was struggling in the midst of despair, Gissing received practical aid and encouragement from Frederic Harrison as tutor to the famous philosopher's sons. Harrison was attracted to him by the reading of his earliest novel, "Workers in the Dawn," and wrote him that it had kept him out of bed the greater part of a night, prophesying great triumphs for him in the field of literature. Of Gissing's methods of writing we know little. He says much in his letters about the work of others, but little about his own. His readings and studies were extensive, and his

devotion to the art of letters was intense. He was happy in his knowledge of Greek, Latin, German and French authors in the original. He took great joy in Shakspeare. As soon as his finances made it possible, he travelled widely on the Continent, and his venturesome hegira to the United States when he was almost without funds is a remarkable episode in his life.

By rare good fortune, I knew a man who had known Gissing while he was in the vicinity of Boston. This man was a compositor on the Transcript, and having read something I had written about the Englishman, he said to me, "I met Gissing years ago," whereupon I asked, "When and how was that?" His answer was: "We were teacher and pupil together in the Waltham High School, but he was there only a short time, and our contacts were very casual." But there they were, and my friend had remembered him all the years. That episode in Gissing's life was in the winter of 1876-1877, when he was only twenty, and his recollections of that trip may be read in a published volume of his letters as well as in his novel, "New Grub Street." Two of the letters are dated from Boston and one from Waltham. From the moment of his arrival in this country he seems to have adapted himself to the changed conditions of life over here. Everything he saw appealed to his curiosity, and he writes of the Americans almost as though he were himself an American.

As related in "New Grub Street" the incidents of Whelpdale's experiences in Chicago are essentially an autobiographical account of Gissing's adventures there. Gissing arrived with not quite \$5 in his pocket, and he paid immediately all but fifty cents of it for board and lodging in a dirty little house on Wabash Avenue. Applying to the editor of a daily newspaper, he was told that there was always a market for short stories. Amid the discomforts of his habitation, he wrote a story, took it to the editor, and was saved from starvation by the receipt of \$18. For some months he supported



himself by writing for the papers; but after he left Chicago he encountered many setbacks and was always poverty-stricken. At last, however, money was sent to him from England, and he went home never to return to this country.

Few modern writers have suffered as much from post-mortem revelations as has Gissing. Following close upon the publication of that classic survey of the comforts of a quiet life, "*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*," in which there is little about the early Gissing, over-candid associates and friends thought it necessary to draw aside the veil from certain phases of his boyhood and youth at school and in London. Perhaps the most conspicuous of these is "*The Private Life of Henry Maitland*," where in the guise of a novel Morley Roberts, who knew him when they were at school together in Manchester, relates with imaginative additions the story of Gissing's life almost from the cradle to the grave. Perhaps this is justifiable from the point of view that if anything is written about him the truth should be told. In any event it is a tribute to him that he is thought to be worth so much attention. Like Samuel Butler's reputation, Gissing's has grown mightily since his death, although it is lamentable that so few of his books are easily obtainable.

How different from Gissing's other books is "*The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*"! It contains the reflections and impressions of a literary man—a man much as Gissing himself was—during the brief period of his comfortable retirement in the country after the end of his financial stringency. It is both Gissing and not Gissing. Henry Ryecroft, like Gissing, had done a large amount of hack work. He reviewed, he wrote miscellaneous articles, and at intervals a book appeared under his name. Year after year passed, and he was still a disappointed poor man, until at the age of fifty he received a wholly unexpected legacy. Gissing himself died at the age of less than fifty, but amid no such delightful surroundings as Henry Ryecroft; for he died in a hamlet far up

on the heights of the Pyrenees on the borders of Spain and France. "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft" is notable both for itself and by reason of its strong contrast with Gissing's other books. It is pervaded with an optimism they do not possess. There are books by other English authors comparable with it, notably Richard Jefferies's account of the quiet life, "The Story of My Heart."

Other posthumously published books by Gissing are two collections of short stories, "The House of Cobwebs" and "A Victim of Circumstances," both containing tales revealing his adaptability to that form of fiction, and "Veranilda," a long story of ancient Rome—a subject wholly alien to his usual field—in which he took pride as a student of its period. I think his reputation will survive mainly—always with the exception of his Henry Ryecroft book—through his novels that were the product of his early unhappy life in London. These novels are "New Grub Street," "Thyrza," "Demos," "The Unclassed," "The Whirlpool," and "The Nether World." He is distinctively the novelist of the struggling English lower, middle and professional classes, and none has painted more accurate portraits of their denizens.

*Vagaries of My Taste in Fiction*

I MIGHT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY these appraisals of authors as I have met them in their pages, but that would be to turn my own pages from the autobiography they claim to be into a series of critical and descriptive essays on the literary world of which I have long been a resident. Therefore I must conclude these outlines with a mere glimpse of the authors of fiction who have satisfied me with their art. Anthony Trollope is one of these, and although by no means have I read everything of his, I never lay down one of his novels without wanting immediately to read another. But something always intervenes, and I am holding in prospect "The Small House at Allington," and "The Way We Live Now," "The Eustace Diamonds" and "Can You Forgive Her?" to select a quartet at random. And whenever I think of Trollope I always think also of that marvellous mother of his, herself a prolific novelist, and of the keen judgment upon him uttered by Michael Sadleir: "He stuck to his tale and let the teaching go, with the result that all his novels are lessons in the art of life and yet not one of them a preachment."

Another novelist I read for pure enjoyment in story-telling is Wilkie Collins. He is very uneven both in skill and in interest, with some of his many novels almost unreadable, but I never lack enthusiasm for such marvellous mysteries as

"The Woman in White," "The Moonstone," "Man and Wife," "Armadale," and "The Dead Secret," in spite of his world being so very unreal. I am a Sherlock Holmes enthusiast, and I am also an admirer of the fiction of Dr. R. Austin Freeman, which is both like and unlike Conan Doyle's. To go back into the annals of English fiction, Charles Reade's "Griffith Gaunt" and "The Cloister and the Hearth" allure me, each in its differing way, and I am not afraid of having my critical judgment censured when I say that a few of Harrison Ainsworth's novels—"Jack Sheppard," and "Rookwood," for instance—have satisfied my craving for the ultraromantic. Of G. P. R. James and G. W. M. Reynolds I know nothing, and am unregretful of my ignorance.

I feel quite sure that I am in the good company of many when I say that I prefer the George Eliot of "Scenes of Clerical Life" and "Adam Bede" to the George Eliot of "Middlemarch" and her later novels. I fail to understand how anyone can resist the appeal of "Robinson Crusoe," and by that I do not mean to imply that I do not care for "Swiss Family Robinson," Jules Verne's "The Mysterious Island," "Foul Play," and all the other novels that take us into the far-off corners of the seven seas. Islands always beckon me in imagination at least. Amid all these helter-skelter literary reminiscences, I acknowledge that my tastes, like everybody's, have their vagaries. I have no fancy for the supernatural in fiction, or for stories that deal with happenings in the future. That highly praised short story by Henry James, "The Turn of the Screw," reaches my mind as an arrant piece of nonsense. Give me instead the blatant mysteries of Miss Braddon's "Lady Audley's Secret" and "Aurora Floyd," or Mrs. Henry Wood's "East Lynne." They deserve their long life.

Speaking of Miss Braddon, which was the pen name of a London publisher's wife, reminds me that her son is W. B. Maxwell, the English novelist who followed in her footsteps with a type of novel far different from hers. His "Mrs.

Thompson," "Spinster of This Parish," and "In Cotton Wool," are among the most distinguished English twentieth century novels.

The super-exaltation of Herman Melville's novels sounds no responsive chord within me, and this despite the fact that I have an intense fondness for their scene, whether I read about it in fiction or in books of travel. I have ranged its waters in my reading from the Solomon Islands to the small and lonely Easter Island off the coast of South America, and am always looking for more books about them. For an earlier chronicler of sea adventures, Captain Marryat, I have only a moderate liking, not caring for his fantastic humor. In my boyhood I read all the popular authors of juvenile fiction, including the English R. M. Ballantyne, W. H. G. Kingston and Captain Mayne Reid, but G. A. Henty came after I was out of my teens.

For my infrequent references to poetry and poets, I must ask forgiveness, even though what I might say about them would be of little importance beside the verdicts of some eminent critics. I have no lack of interest in them, but their influence has been cast into the inmost recesses of my mind as my pencil, pen and typewriter have done the mechanical labor in this discursive chronicle of my wandering mental life. Art is so long and time is so fleeting that many literary names important, at least to myself, must be omitted from this record. But no, there is one name that must not be omitted, and that name is Robert Louis Stevenson.

# 75

## *A Message from Arnold Bennett*

IT WAS FORTUNATE FOR ME that I personally reviewed Arnold Bennett's distinguished novel "The Old Wives' Tale" at the very moment of its publication over thirty years ago. What I wrote about it brought to me one of the best authors' letters I have ever received, best in every sense of the word. It was gracious and kindly, and it gave me to understand that there was an author who did not pose as never reading anything a reviewer wrote about his books. Its personal point of view is its most significant quality, and it proves that he was not hesitant to take issue with one of his readers. It reveals the temperament of the remarkable man and the industrious author whose name circled the world during his long career. It is as good-natured toward me as I was censorious of him, and it is dated from his residence in France. He had written much before "The Old Wives' Tale," and he wrote a great deal more afterwards; but nothing I read of his gave me so much pleasure as this:

VILLA DES NÉFLIERS  
AVON-FONTAINEBLEAU  
2nd Sept. 1909

MY DEAR SIR—

I am much obliged for your article on "The Old Wives' Tale" which you have been good enough to send me. It has given me

great pleasure. You must also be a very courageous man, for you are no doubt aware that nothing infuriates an author more than to be told that his latest book is his "first to be seriously reckoned with." However this only proves, for me, that you have not read some of my books (which after all is not a crime). Nobody who thought what you think about "The Old Wives' Tale" could possibly consider "Whom God Hath Joined" as a book not to be reckoned with. As a literary critic of long experience I am prepared to assert that of the 30 books I have published at least four are inferior to "The Old Wives' Tale" in nothing except length. They are perhaps all bad but they are certainly not worse.

After this brief excursus on your courage, may I say that an author could not expect a more thoughtful, perspicacious and dignified laudation than this which you have lavished upon me. Such things are very rare.

Believe me,

Yours Sincerely,

ARNOLD BENNETT

All this, with its combination of humor and good humor, was characteristic of Arnold Bennett. I had read very little of his before "The Old Wives' Tale," although he was then far from his beginnings in fiction. Therefore he was fully justified in reprimanding me for my remark that that novel was his "first to be seriously reckoned with." Since then I have read many of his novels up to his very last, "Imperial Palace," published in 1930, the year before his death. I read them in alternating moods of approval and disapproval, as have probably many others who followed diligently the course of his fiction.

He was the most industrious of novelists and writers of varied forms of prose. I have read his journals, those remarkable documents in three large volumes which cause wonderment over how he could have time to write them in the midst of his other work. We might think that often he would write the clock around more than one day a week. They give an extremely detailed and practically continuous record showing that he knew "how to live on twenty-four hours a day,"

to quote the title of one of his little books. I have a clipping of my review to which he refers in his letter, I have recently re-read every word of it, and I know that he is absolutely right in his judgment of my self-assurance. And that review was of inordinate length, too, for it runs to the extent of two of the Transcript long columns, no less than thirty-six hundred words!



# 76

## *Letters from Mrs. Belloc Lowndes*

MY CORRESPONDENCE WITH Mrs. Belloc Lowndes began in 1910, and its continuance to this day is a series of persistent high lights of my life on and after the Transcript. My regret is that other authors have not been such faithful letter-writers to me. She wrote me first a letter dated only May 23rd, but since the book she mentions in her first sentence was published in 1910, the year is self-evident. Here is the letter, which is addressed to "E. F. E., Reviewer, by courtesy of the editor."

9 BARTON ST.  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.

DEAR SIR—

I feel I must write and tell you what great pleasure your sympathetic and discriminating review of "Studies in Wives" gave me, the writer of the book.

It is my painful fate to be—mostly—misunderstood by the American reviewers. That is, my books, especially "The Uttermost Farthing" and "Studies in Wives," are taken as being "morbid," "unfit for general reading," and so on. It was the more delightful for me to read your notice, for I have got to dread, rather, the look of an American press cutting.

I hope when you write a book—or your next book—that you will have the good fortune to meet with many reviewers as "understanding" as you have proved to the works of

Yours very sincerely,

MARIE BELLOC LOWNDES.

Among the other notices I received with yours was one concluding with the words "Readers may be warned of the unwholesomeness of this group of repellent tales."

I pass through the years with Mrs. Lowndes until I come to the following letter, which is especially pertinent because of its references to two of her earlier novels, in addition to "The Lodger":

9 BARTON STREET,  
WESTMINSTER, S.W.  
27th August, 1931

MY DEAR MR. EDGETT,

I know you will forgive me for not having acknowledged your most kind reprint from the Book Section of the Transcript when I tell you that I have been far from well. I am better now, and I want to tell you how deeply grateful I am to you for your generous words about *The Lodger*. It has naturally gratified me very much that Messrs. Harrison Smith should have republished this book of mine. It was, I think you are aware, written long before the great spate of mystery stories.

I don't know if you ever read a book of mine which has run *The Lodger* very close in popularity, though it is quite unlike *The Lodger*. *The Chink in the Armour* is its name, and my next novel to be published in America some time in October is nearer to *The Chink in the Armour* than any book I have ever written. In other words, it is a romance, and, like a little novel dear to my heart, long out of print, *The Uttermost Farthing*, has an American young man as its hero. When I was a girl one of my American cousins spent some time in Europe. He was the first American man I had ever really known, and he was so delightfully kind to me that, though I have never consciously taken a real person and put him or her in a book, he unconsciously created in my mind an ideal which has governed every portrait I have ever drawn of a man belonging to your country.

I hope you will allow me to say again what I think I said in a former letter—that is, that next time you come to Europe I trust you will give me good warning, so that I may have the pleasure

of seeing you and of asking you to meet some of my fellow writers.

With kind and grateful thoughts, believe me to remain  
Very sincerely yours,

MARIE BELLOC LOWNDES

I had read both "The Chink in the Armour" and "The Uttermost Farthing," and I have read them since more than once, with appreciation both of their merits as fiction and for the marvellous mystery in each. I am glad to say that I have in my possession a leather-bound copy of the latter with this inscription on the flyleaf: "Edwin Francis Edgett with the kind thoughts of the writer, Marie Belloc Lowndes." Its clever title, "The Uttermost Farthing," apparently has had an attraction for two novelists, at least, for there is a novel so named written by Dr. R. Austin Freeman, another expert English story-teller. Mrs. Lowndes's, however, was published first, and there is no resemblance between the two aside from the title.

No chance to give Mrs. Lowndes "good warning" of my arrival in London has yet arisen, and to my regret I doubt if it ever will come. My farewell to London in 1900 was a long farewell. I had the opportunity to meet her in Boston several years ago, but unhappily failed in that. Nevertheless, although the ocean is broad and mails are uncertain in these times, I feel sure that a letter now and then will pass from one shore to the other addressed to her and addressed to me. That is my sincere hope.

*From the Author of "If Winter  
Comes"*

"HAIL ACROSS THE YEARS." These are the words at the beginning of a letter from Mr. Hutchinson in which, in response to my request, he gave me permission to print two letters he had written me long ago. It is indeed a long journey in time across those years from 1910 and 1913 to 1940. "It's a far cry back," he continued, "to when I last wrote you, but vividly your letter recalls to me the sight of your name printed at the head of the too generous appreciation you gave my work. By all means use in your autobiography anything of mine you care to. I shall read with greatest interest the record of one whose esteem I have greatly cherished."

This is his first letter, which came to me entirely unexpectedly soon after the date at its beginning:

53 CROFTDOWN ROAD,  
HIGHGATE ROAD,  
LONDON, N.W.  
August 1st, 1910

DEAR SIR,

I wonder if you would do me the great kindness of sending me a copy of the Boston Transcript containing a review of my novel, "Once Aboard the Lugger—"? I have just heard that you did me

the privilege of noticing the book; and I would very much like to know what a paper of the Transcript's standing had to say of it.

Writing as a fellow journalist—of the Daily Graphic—I am further going to ask you to excuse my sending price of the paper and postage! I didn't quite know where to get U.S.A. stamps. But I am afraid I am taking a liberty, one way or another.

Yours truly,

A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

The second letter I received from Mr. Hutchinson was also unexpected. When the first was written, Mr. Hutchinson had his reputation to establish; the letter that follows found it established. Some years later with "If Winter Comes" his popularity reached high-water mark, but unfortunately I had heard nothing from him by mail until his letter of 1940 came not long ago.

53 CROFTDOWN ROAD  
HIGHGATE ROAD,  
LONDON, N.W.  
Feb. 6th, 1913

DEAR MR. EDGETT,

Your generous treatment of both my books is my excuse for writing to you. I feel that I must try to tell you with what tingling satisfaction I read your review of "The Happy Warrior" in the Transcript; and if I fail—as fail I shall—to convey to you the full degree of that satisfaction, then at least I must write to say Thank You. Two years ago you wrote a review of "Once Aboard the Luggar" which made me say "Here is a man who really understands." I was staying by the sea at the time and I took the review down to the lonely shore and revelled in it. I would have written to you then, but already I was deep in the throes of "The Happy Warrior," and bound up in the determination to cut out all that belonged to the past until I had wrestled to the end of this that belonged to the future. "The Happy Warrior"—I feel I can tell you—was written under desperately difficult conditions and I was not often feeling like going on with it. So all that is how you were mercifully spared a letter from me before this!

But you can escape no longer! When I read your generous

praise of "The Happy Warrior" I know that I am reading something miles away from the critical estimation of the ordinary reviewer. Whether the terms in which you wrote of my book were good or bad I should still eagerly look out for them. It is such a real satisfaction to meet one who has got right into your book—who has met one's little men and women and has *understood* their faults and their virtues.

I rather wish I had not written to you after all! On the one hand I feel in danger of giving you an idea that I am egotistical and affected about my stuff, and on the other I simply cannot express to you quite what your reviews have meant to me. It comes to this—that I can feel you have just been reading my book;—and that you look up from its pages and that you extend your hand; that I take it; and that nothing is said—or needs be said. That is how I feel.

Yours very sincerely,

A. S. M. HUTCHINSON

After having resigned his editorial position on the staff of the Daily Graphic and his profession as an active journalist, Mr. Hutchinson went on writing novels, among their high lights being "The Clean Heart," "If Winter Comes," "This Freedom" and "One Increasing Purpose." Apropos, this letter written by Professor Phelps from his summer home in Michigan, seems especially pertinent:

8 September, 1921

DEAR EDGETT—

I'm very glad we agree (as we so often do) on "If Winter Comes." What a fine novel it is! I look to him [Hutchinson] as a coming force and a bringer of happiness.

Ever Yours,

WILLIAM LYON PHELPS.

If the leisure hours ever come to me, I hope some day to find the time to re-read at least two of his novels, "If Winter Comes" and "Once Aboard the L:

*A Rose and a Thorn*

THE BEGINNING OF the following letter gives me the opportunity to say that I never made it my habit to forward to the authors of books I reviewed clippings of what I had written. This, it will be noted, is a spontaneous appreciation from Mr. Raymond, and not an acknowledgment of something received. It was therefore all the more welcome. Once in a while, I did send a review to an author, but my purpose then was to mention some special point of praise or blame.

Mr. Raymond's letter, written in the fall of 1925 from his home in Sussex, reads:

DEAR SIR:

My press-clipping agency has sent me more than one very kind review (presumably broadcast) by you of my novel, "We the Accused," and I feel moved to say "thank you" for such splendid service. It is extraordinarily pleasant to think of an unknown friend "over there" laboring so doughtily in one's interest. For some reason I have never induced more than a thousand or so of American readers to buy my novels; and if "We the Accused" goes rather better, I feel sure it will be you, very largely, that I shall have to thank.

And, anyway, thank you so much for all that you have already done for it.

Yours very sincerely,

ERNEST RAYMOND.

In any event, there were doubtless more American readers of "We the Accused" than Mr. Raymond reckoned. There are always the borrowers of public library books and the subscribers to lending libraries whose interest in any book is not disclosed in the sales figures. For every book they purchase there may be a dozen or more readers.

"We the Accused" is certainly a remarkable novel, and deserves a long life. I tried to do my best for it, when I wrote in my review: "It is the product of a mind that holds and unites the world of reality with the scope of the imagination of a novelist who understands the alliance of life with literature. It is a novel that has for its substance the interwoven warp and woof of our fallible human natures. In its pages a man and a woman are led astray, not so much by their passions, as in many novels, but by the fateful sway of their emotions. They sin and they suffer, they endure more than it seems possible for the sensitive spirit to endure, and after continuous trials and attempts to escape paying the penalty of their wrong-doing, they discover that the way of the transgressor is hard and that the wages of sin is death." This was my verdict five years ago, expressed again in varying words in my radio broadcast and on the printed page, and it is still my verdict. If I wrote about the novel again, I should write about it even more strongly.

Lest I be condemned for egotism in the reproduction of this and other complimentary letters, perhaps I may make amends by giving another side of the picture. The bitter and the sweet both came to me, although I make no boast when I say that the one was not so usual as the other. The following letter has to do with my work not as a writer, but as an editor. It came to me written by hand on the stationery of the University of Wisconsin, and I have the permission of its writer, who was then and is now Professor of English there, to present it. It is dated February 2, 1926:



## GENTLEMEN:

The author of course must stand for a good deal of foolishness—smile and say nothing. Certainly, for one, that is my attitude. But in all my experience, I never met quite such well-meaning inanity as that in the Transcript of Jan. 9 on "Two Lives." The poor child—some Boston University sophomore?—did her best (and I feel friendly to her effort); the blame rests on the slapstick policy of the Transcript, especially with any book of verse. Do you purpose to take American art seriously, or do you not? The amateurishness of the thing couldn't be matched outside a high school periodical—or some other book review of the Transcript. The office used to turn over contemporary literature for my definitive settlement when I too was twenty (and a sophomore at B. U.) and my authors were fifty. So I suppose there is ironic justice in this. Still I can hardly dare suspect my own juvenescence of quite such infantile piffle in idea and expression. No wonder the Transcript has lost out. You will be missing your guess if you interpret this comment as an outburst of the genus irritabile vatum. I am your old contributor,

W. E. LEONARD.

Well, and that's that. I must have enjoyed reading it when it came in my daily mail. There seems to have been no limit to its writer's disgust: the Transcript primarily, amateur reviewers, sophomores, Boston University, women writers (he assumes that his reviewer was a woman), high-school periodicals, even himself at the age of twenty, and the editor (myself) at an age not specified. The review filled less than half a column, and in the course of it we are told that "the work demands a great deal of praise, and certainly is a highly commendable attempt." Rather flat, I acknowledge, but I will take all the blame for it, although I am not going to offer any apologies.

## *How Books Come in for Review*

MY READERS MAY WONDER how all the books I have mentioned coming to me for review in the Transcript, or any other paper, arrive. Do we buy them from the publishers, do we order them from the booksellers, or are they sent us at the request of their authors? No, the system is simpler than that. In the first place, every publishing house of any size or standing has what is known as a publicity department in charge of an expert with several assistants. From it are sent out at frequent intervals information about its activities, its seasonal catalogues, announcements of forthcoming books, items of personal interest about and interviews with their authors, and all sorts of news thought to be of interest to newspaper readers. All this comes without charge, for it is a reciprocal service to the advantage of both publishers and newspapers. The placing of advertisements is also an important adjunct of the general system of publicity. As I have discovered since my retirement two years ago, this publicity material, much of which still reaches me at my home through the kindness of the publishers, enables anyone to keep abreast of the literary times.

More important than all this, however, is the actual sending and arrival of the books for review. They come on or about the day of their publication, and sometimes a week or

more in advance of the day when they will be found on sale in the bookstores, with a request not to print the review before then. The publishers want the reviews in the papers, and the papers want them for the benefit of their readers. I must add that the books are sent without prejudice; that in other words we give and their publishers want a fair and just appraisal.

To do otherwise would be to bring the art and practice of book reviewing into disrepute. The publishers want readers to know that the books are available. They do not want them to be ignored, although sometimes with their daily influx into the newspaper offices, some worth-while books received nothing more than the formal acknowledgment in the list of new books that used to be printed every Saturday in the Transcript. The publishers understood this perfectly and made no complaint. If they ever wrote us about an expected review, it was merely to call our attention to what might be an oversight. And if we felt sure that an important book had failed to reach us through an oversight, we did not hesitate to remind them of it.

Outsiders who happen to enter a literary editor's room at the height of the book publishing season are naturally surprised, and perhaps astonished, when they see the packages of books arriving, or piled up on the tables. They have come by mail or express in large bundles, as single books, by twos or threes, or by dozens or more. In and out of their brown-paper wrappings they are an impressive sight, and I have known visitors, so unaccustomed are they to seeing so many books in an office, to be under the delusion that we were running a bookstore. The sight may arouse envy in some minds, although they are the mere commonplaces of our daily work. "And they cost you nothing?" we sometimes heard "No, indeed. Why should they?" is the common reply, without further explanation.

At any rate, there they are. Later, the packages are opened,

the receipt of the books is recorded, or it was once upon a time, and they become immediately the problem of the literary editor for distribution and review. It is all interesting work, to be sure, but it is merely one important phase of the day-by-day activities of a literary editor's room. For many years an annotated list of the books received during the preceding week was printed in the Book Section of the Saturday issue of the Transcript. At one time my columns were so crowded that I omitted the lines of annotation to conserve my space. But so many complaints came in that I restored them after a few weeks' interval, for it was a system I had instituted myself soon after I became literary editor. The whole list was one of the most important features of my pages, but unfortunately it was discontinued immediately after my departure. It was absolutely essential to a compact and adequate chronicle of the passing show of books.

A recapitulation of the number of books that came to the Transcript for review during my regime as literary editor interests me, and it may also appeal to others. Fortunately, I have in my possession a tabular record from 1903 to 1937. The total mounted from 2390 in 1903 to 5185 in 1930, its highest point. For four successive years, 1927 to 1930, the number slightly exceeded five thousand annually, and then it began to decrease steadily as the fortunes of the country declined because of the depression. Through the thirties, it continued close to four thousand, the total number received in 1937, the last year of my record, being 4115. I have no resources of information since this last mentioned year, but the books for review sent to the Transcript certainly have not again reached an annual four thousand mark.

*Vacations at Monadnock*

WE ON THE TRANSCRIPT had our annual summer vacations. For a long time we had been given the traditional two weeks, but when at last one of us—he happened to be my friend Charles E. Alexander, the society editor now retired, who was especially gifted with the ability to do that sort of thing—went to Mr. Mandell with the suggestion that the older members of the staff should have a summer rest of three weeks, he was met with these words: “Why not? I’ll give you *all* three weeks after this.” That, as I have said before, was characteristic of George Mandell. The time was to come, however, with the melancholy days. Our leader and friend was dead, the Transcript needed every cent it could save, and we did not have vacations of even two weeks. We did not complain, but at last the old-time vacations returned.

The mechanical employees, however, took vacations at their own expense. Lest anyone may think this unjust, let me explain. They worked on a time schedule, about seven and a half hours a day, and they were paid a high rate of hourly wages for overtime, of which there was an abundance. They were union members, with all that is implied in those words, which included “collective bargaining” and other concessions to “labor,” as they were described, although they worked no harder and labored for a shorter time than we editors, re-

porters and business office clerks. In recent days there has arisen a "writers' union," and when I was asked to join it my answer was more emphatic than polite. I would not be a member of a labor union under any circumstances whatever, and I am glad now not to be a member of a profession in which one is tolerated.

The Transcript management was in many ways always very good to all of us. For years everybody on the entire staff, over four hundred persons, received a nine-pound turkey at Thanksgiving, and anyone who wanted more than that weight would merely pay the difference. There were many other favors given us. If we were compelled to stay away from the office on account of illness, we found no decrease in the contents of our pay envelopes when the end of the week or weeks came. And there were many pensioners among the elderly and incapacitated on the rolls. No employees could ask for better treatment. Discharges for any reason were practically unknown. We took pride in describing ourselves as members of the Transcript family, and almost all of us said that we would rather work on the Transcript than on any other newspaper.

On our wedding tour, my wife and I made the acquaintance of Mount Monadnock, not merely the region in southwestern New Hampshire dominated by that peak, but the mountain itself. We arrived there in the moonlight of the evening of September 15, 1896, and we then spent ten happy days at the old hotel, which is still standing, on the westerly slope of the mountain, about halfway up to the summit from the valley below. The season was almost ended, and there were few guests. Mount Monadnock is an isolated peak, about three thousand feet above the sea level, surrounded by lesser mountains, and not forming one of a continuous range like the famous White Mountains of northerly New Hampshire. For several subsequent summers we went elsewhere, to Jefferson, to the Hoosac Tunnel district in western Massachu-

setts, and even to so short a distance from Boston as its suburb of Braintree. But when 1904 came we began a series of visits that took us to the same old Monadnock Mountain House for thirty years.

We were almost always accompanied by friends, at first by Thomas A. Henshaw, who was about twice our age, whom we had met there on our first going thither, and with whom we remained in intimate friendship until his death in 1909. His niece, Gertrude L. Hodges, was also with us, and later we drove up in our car with my cousin William L. King and his wife. Eventually, beginning in 1925, we had with us our friends Herbert and Grace Jackson for two July weeks of seven consecutive summers. Occasionally we remained home, and I then especially enjoyed working in my garden, which had to be neglected while we were at Monadnock.

Since Monadnock always beckons us in mind as well as in body, I must say something more about our summer weeks there. It is now six years since we last made that journey by train from Boston to Fitzwilliam, where we left the railroad to travel by automobile through the woods, along the country roads and up the mountain side. I find by dead reckoning that we passed more than half a year at Monadnock in homeopathic instalments, and that is quite a slice out of anyone's lifetime. In the first period of our visits there, we would go on to the next station beyond Fitzwilliam, which is Troy (New Hampshire, and not New York or Asia), and it would then take over two hours for the horse-and-carriage trip, while in the later days by motor the lapse of time was less than half an hour, although it was seven miles from Fitzwilliam to the five from Troy.

When our railroad station was Troy, our post office was Fitzwilliam, and the hotel itself stands in Jaffrey, which three towns are among the half-dozen clustered in the valleys at the foot of the mountain. On the train journey we would stop at Winchendon in Massachusetts, renowned for its manufacture

of toys, and at its railroad station we would look curiously at the wooden image of a horse placed there to advertise the resources of the town. When we reached Troy about ten miles further along, the stranger would naturally think, if he remembered his Homer, that a serious mistake had been made and that the horse had been placed in the wrong town.

During our summer days high up on the western side of Monadnock, we would look at the rocky peak above us, and downward from the hotel piazza to widespread scenes over the hills and valleys of southwestern New Hampshire, southern Vermont and northwestern Massachusetts. Below us was the little manufacturing town of Troy, the only settlement in sight from that point of vantage. In the foreground rose Gap Mountain, with its two rounded humps whence came its name; the town of Fitzwilliam nestled behind it, and across the valley and over the railroad track that ran from Boston to Montreal was the lesser mountain known as Little Monadnock. Beyond the ridge behind the hotel on the easterly side of the mountain were the Peterboro Hills and Pack Monadnock in the near distance, and beyond them the higher ranges of southern New Hampshire.

We would diversify our mornings and afternoons by climbing through the woods along the carefully marked trails that radiated upwards and downwards from the hotel, we would sit beside the wood-burning stove in the office, for there were many chilly hours even in July and August when a good fire was necessary. We would also pace the piazza extending along the entire hotel front, looking horizonward from what we might easily imagine to be the promenade deck of a ship at sea, with the clouds rolling below us like waves of the ocean. It was also my special diversion to climb above the hotel over the rocks, or to go down the road, to pick blueberries in the pastures. And often we would take our ease seated just within the door of the old New England barn watching a continuous procession of automobiles on a pleasant day as they came up



the road with their freight of climbers intent on conquering afoot the mountain heights which rose one thousand feet above them. They were obliged to disembark there, for that spot was the end of the road. The barn, by the way, no longer stands, for if it had not been demolished, it would have fallen into the ruins of its old age.

Looking into the days gone by, as we sat there, I could bring to mind the gate that had closed the private road, over a mile in length, which barred the way to the hotel. It was opened only when a vehicle came along that wanted to enter, and was thereupon closed. On it were inscribed the words, "Horseless carriages not admitted," and the rule was always enforced, until with the march of time arrived the day when nothing but motor vehicles came that way. Drawn by horse or otherwise, they had to pay \$1.00 for the privilege of using the road, which belonged to the owners of the property, and not to the town or state. The owners paid for keeping it in the repair which was necessary to make it safe.

To visit these scenes, and to stop at the hotel, was not to leave all thought of books behind. The literary associations of Monadnock are many and lingering. By all who visit and ramble through its woods, the names of Emerson and Thoreau are constantly seen and heard. In a field outside the gate stood a lonely-looking little house known as the Emerson cottage, where Dr. Edward Waldo Emerson passed many of his summer days. One evening, as we were seated in the hotel office, and I was reading short stories aloud, a diversion I was frequently drafted to perform, we heard a faint sound at the door. It was opened, and there stood the shy figure of a man who appeared to be dazed. I did not recognize him, but the hotel clerk immediately exclaimed: "Why, Dr. Emerson!" He had wandered from his home below, over a mile away, and did not know where he was. Mrs. Blair, one of the owners then in charge of the hotel, telephoned his house, and was told that they were relieved to hear about him, for they had

seen and heard nothing from him all the afternoon. An automobile was brought out at once, and in a few minutes he was restored to his family. Like his famous father, he had lost his memory in his old age, and though the mountainside had been familiar to him from boyhood, he had become oblivious to his surroundings. We never saw him again, for he died soon afterwards. His title of Doctor was professional, for he had been for many years a practicing physician in Concord.

Memories of both these famous authors, Emerson and Thoreau, confront the visitor to Monadnock at every turn. The Thoreau Trail leads up a steep grade back of the hotel to the high ridge overlooking Jaffrey, Monadnock and the Peterboro Hills. From the Emerson Seat and the Thoreau Rock there, a far vista carries the eyes of the observer eastward and northward, and thence must have gazed those men from Concord over scenes of solitude and beauty that contrasted sharply with the low-lying meadows and streams of the historic town where they had passed the greater number of their days. Anyone who looks through the collected editions of their writings will find references to the Monadnock they loved so well. Is it any wonder that we too love Monadnock and its memories, and that we wonder if we shall ever see them again?

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## *Days in My Garden*

SINCE I HAVE GONE so far into my story, it seems about time that I should say something about the house and grounds on Pleasant Street in Arlington where we dwelt for the thirty-one years from 1908 to 1939. We had been living in an apartment in Brookline on the other side of Boston for about a year and a half, and we soon began to long for a house of our own and a plot of land upon which we could place our feet whenever we wanted to go out of doors. Through an advertisement in the Transcript, we went out to Arlington one Sunday, and found exactly the sort of place we wanted. The house was old-fashioned and attractive, the land was about an acre, and it contained an abundance of apple and other fruit-bearing trees, with currant, gooseberry and blackberry bushes and grapevines. Also there was room for the growing of flowers, and especially of vegetables, which I particularly wanted. We leased the place for three years, and then bought it.

Was I a successful farmer or gardener? I certainly was not. On Saturdays and Sundays I spent four or five hours, with other periods at intervals during the week, working in my garden, enjoying every moment, no matter what my lack of success or how hard I worked. If I had depended upon my crops, or if I had sought to maintain a real farm and depend

upon it for our living, we should have starved. Sometimes our vegetables would grow and allow themselves to be harvested, and at other times they refused to obey my orders as though they had a spite against me. I was very successful with beans of the variety known as Kentucky Wonder, but a plentiful supply of peas was unknown, and although I planted and hoed them, and tied the vines into an upright posture, their yield was pitiful. Yet I persevered with them spring after spring. Cornstalks would grow valiantly, but there were few edible ears of corn on them. I had a fair amount of success with carrots, but the other root crops such as beets, turnips, parsnips, and also the cucumbers and squashes, were so scanty as to be almost negligible. But year after year I persevered, always hoping for a better season to come.

For a time my trees bore abundantly, and we had all the apples we wanted to eat, to store for the winter and to give away. During my first years there I planted many dwarf and a few standard apple trees, but they did not prosper, and eventually they all, old and new trees, through the ravages of time and the weather, especially the disasters of the great hurricane of September, 1938, left me with no practicable orchard. In the end, I might better have had no orchard at all, for the useless apples that fell from the trees cumbered the ground, and caused me a great deal of labor in their gathering and disposal into garbage cans. The trees were losing limbs and branches so continuously that I spent many hours with axe and saw, giving me plenty and to spare of fuel for our living-room fireplace.

Our house itself was solid and sturdy, going on almost to a century of existence. As the land sloped downward from the street, it sat directly on the ground at the front, and needed no steps there, and the rear of the first floor was one story above the lower level, overlooking the orchard and garden from the dining room, underneath which was the kitchen, available by a flight of stairs, and by a dumb-waiter off one

side in a pantry. When we first looked through the house we thought this would be a disadvantage, but we grew to like it. It was pleasant to have the kitchen removed from alongside the dining room, and to have a clear outlook upon our land from the rear windows, and the view of the large Arlington lake, Spy Pond, only about three hundred feet away. And there was the large old barn, with three stories and a cellar. This was my workshop, and my garage during the twelve years when we were driving our automobile over almost the entire eastern and central sections of Massachusetts. In spite of the attractions of this place, however, we were not sorry to leave it and go back to apartment-house life.

*Walt Whitman and  
J. T. Trowbridge*

I HAVE MADE THE ACQUAINTANCE of many authors, both English and American, sometimes by personal meeting, sometimes by correspondence, and sometimes by both. The beginning of the excitement over Walt Whitman came long before my day, but I had a sort of vicarious knowledge of him by visits from Horace Traubel, who had been his companion, friend and literary factotum in the Camden cottage where the poet passed his last years. Traubel was a native of Camden, a poet himself who had known Whitman since boyhood, and a sharer of some of the poet's radical views. He kept a diary of their association which was published in three large volumes entitled "With Walt Whitman in Camden," but they contain only a small portion of his extensive records. Traubel was a very likable man, as I discovered from his correspondence and occasional calls when he came to Boston after Whitman's death. He was the product of two races, his father being a Jew and his mother a Gentile. This he himself told me, though I had never guessed it.

Willingly I found space in the Transcript for some of his Whitman memorabilia, and a miscellany selected from it is in the Harvard College Library. It was agreeable to talk to

Traubel because of his quiet and kindly manner, and his reminiscences of his association with the good gray poet. I wish I might have seen him oftener and known him better, for he was to me an echo of the voices of the American literary past. He was a man of thwarted ambitions, for he overestimated the value and permanence of his own writings, both his prose and his verse. As a chronicler and keeper of Whitman's slightest words, he was indefatigable; had he been more selective and reticent, he would have done his friend a greater service.

During his last years, while he was climbing onward and upward towards the great age of ninety, I was a near neighbor of John Townsend Trowbridge in Arlington, and when I think of Whitman I think of him, for in a conversation once he asked me if I had known the poet. Thereby he credited me with more years than I deserved. Trowbridge had lived on Pleasant Street since 1867, and he died there in 1916. Seeing him on his strolls through the street by my house, and talking to him, carried my mind back to my boyhood days when I was reading with great admiration his Jack Hazard stories, and also some of his other fiction addressed to grown-up readers. Among them were "Cudjo's Cave," "Neighbor Jackwood," and notably that short story with the appealing title of "The Man Who Stole a Meeting House," which first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and is now included in one of his volumes of short stories. When I looked for some mention of it in his autobiography, "My Own Story," I was surprised and disappointed to see nothing there about it. I still think it a masterpiece of the form of original humor that made him the precursor of Frank R. Stockton, although he never was so fantastic as the author of "The Lady or the Tiger?" Those were the days when Oliver Optic, Elijah Kellogg, Horatio Alger and Harry Castlemon reigned in the hearts of boy (and often girl) readers, and I have always

thought that Trowbridge was the best, though not the most prolific of them all. A volume of his poetry contains his familiar "Darius Green and His Flying Machine," first published in *Our Young Folks*, and his equally popular versified tale of "The Vagabonds," which first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

He could always tell many good stories and talk happily about his active past, and give abundant reminiscences of the literary people who filled it, notably in his Boston days. One of the best and most personal of these stories, related by him when I was seated in his parlor as one of a group of friends, was the remark made to him by a colored servant, "coal-black," as he described her. "You do remind me so much of my dear departed husband," she said, "you walk so proud." No characterization of him could be more exact, for he stood as firm and erect when he was in the eighties as he must have been in the forties. It seems a pity that the books of J. T. Trowbridge are so much out of date in this ultramodern twentieth century, into which he lived for no less than sixteen years. And where also are the many other novelists and storytellers of yesterday? Have modern technique and altered tastes, if not the wind, blown them all away back into the past of their own epochs? It may be, but they without doubt remain in the memories of some of us who feel sure that the favorites of the past are better than the favorites of the present. The times and the manners have changed, of course, but not with all of us.



*At a Luncheon to H. G. Wells*

ONE AFTERNOON IN THE OCTOBER OF 1931, during one of H. G. Wells's periodical globe-trotting tours when he included the United States in his itinerary, he came over to Boston. After a reception and dinner in Cambridge, several of us were invited by Frank Nelson Doubleday of the publishing house then issuing his books to meet him the following noon at an informal luncheon in the Copley Plaza Hotel. As I remember, there were fewer than ten of us at the table. Ellery Sedgwick of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Robert Choate of the *Boston Herald*, Professor Samuel Eliot Morison of Harvard were among them, and I was accompanied by my friend and associate of the *Transcript*, Karl Schriftgiesser. Mr. Mandell, our managing editor, had been invited, but it was almost impossible to persuade him to attend such functions, even with the inducement of sitting at the table with the renowned H. G. Wells. It would of course have been a great pleasure to us to have him there.

It was my privilege to sit on Mr. Wells's right, with Mr. Sedgwick on his left. My conversation with the chief guest was casual. He referred of his own volition to George Gissing, to that author's early marital infelicities, and especially to the disguised biography of him written by Morley Roberts under the title of "*The Private History of Henry Maitland*," to which I have already referred. He spoke of his own appear-

ance in it under the discernibly disguised name of Rivers, a fact I already knew, together with other false names that deceived nobody who knew anything about Gissing. Among other not very important things I said to Wells was that I wished he would revert to the style of some of his earlier realistic novels like "Kipps" and "Tono Bungay," meaning of course that I preferred them to his later excursions into politics and social and economic discussions in the form of fiction or otherwise. His reply was, "Those days are past and gone," or words to that effect. Yet, such is the outcome of the passing of time from one to another era that when I opened recently both of those novels to re-read them, my interest in them was so mild that I did not take the trouble to finish their reading.

One remark Wells made across the table to Professor Morison struck me forcibly by its bluntness. Both had been present at the dinner in Cambridge the evening before, and Professor Morison said something that recalled the occasion to Wells's mind. Whereupon he blurted out, "You said that last evening," in a tone that implied, "Well, can't you say anything new." Of course no offence was meant, but it sounded discourteous. On the whole, however, the hero of the luncheon impressed me by his quietude of manner and mildness of speech. There was not the slightest trace of "I am the great Wells" in anything he said. The moment he entered the room after the rest of us were assembled I was astonished by the accuracy of his printed likenesses, and in every respect he was worth the two hours we spent in his company. I have never seen him since, nor have I had any correspondence with him. The luncheon, I may add, began with the conventional round of cocktails in those days of supposed prohibition, and with one exception the entire company each had his share. The exception, it is perhaps needless to say, was not Wells, and neither was it I.

*Vale H. T. Parker*

WHEN I RECEIVED BY TELEPHONE one March evening in 1934 the news that H. T. Parker had died of pneumonia, I was aghast. Although I knew he was not immortal, I had never thought he would die. It was incredible that he was dead, that he was no longer in this world, that I was never to see him again as he flitted by me in the Transcript hallways, on the stairs, as he sat at his desk, or as he opened my door and said to me, referring to a play he had suggested I ought to see: "Those seats will be ready for you at the box office this evening." I don't know what state of mind I could have been in, but it seemed strange that I should be alive and he dead. I had not even known that he had been taken to a hospital, or that he had not been in the office during the preceding week. When we saw each other we merely took it for granted, and when we did not see each other we likewise took it for granted that we were somewhere about the buildings.

The full name of H. T. P., as he almost invariably signed himself, was Henry Taylor Parker. He had been on the Transcript in one capacity and another since he began writing special articles for it when he was a student at Harvard in the late eighties. He represented us as a correspondent in New York and London, and back in New York again, until he came over to Boston to remain for the rest of his life. He

responded immediately to Mr. Mandell's offer of the position of editor of the music and drama departments in September, 1905, in succession to Edward E. Edwards, who had just died, and who had succeeded me when I went to London in July, 1899. Also I had substituted for Mr. Edwards during his two months' illness prior to his death.

Parker held one of the records of long Transcript service, but unlike other members of the editorial staff he was at his desk in Boston only through the theatre and concert seasons of about ten months annually. But he was free to lengthen or shorten that period as he chose. He usually left us about the middle of every June, and returned early in September when the theatres reopened at the end of their summer closing. Sometimes he would go out West, sometimes to the White Mountains, but customarily to Europe and its various theatre and music centres. It was a vacation for him in name only, for he was an assiduous worker, and while he was away he wrote for us a series of letters in which he kept Transcript readers informed about what was going on in England and on the Continent, especially in the theatres and concert halls. He received a salary during the Boston season, but for his summer work he was paid space rates, which were much higher than the reward of other contributors.

I doubt if there was any subject upon which Parker could not and did not write. His specialty was the theatre and music, but he could write with equal authority upon books, painting, sculpture, architecture and all the fine arts, on politics, economics, sociology, religion, and even on science. He was one of the most generally well informed men I have known. He wrote as one who knew the inmost heart of everything. He took up a piece of writing with the surety of one who knew he was able to accomplish it. His vacation period gave him the opportunity to survey at will the whole world of knowledge and thought, including of course his favorite music and the drama. On nothing did he write except as a

professional and a specialist; he was never the critical amateur. He was an extremely resourceful journalist. There seemed to be no boundaries to his scope. Perhaps his most significant failing was due to his unlimited enthusiasm, to his inability or unwillingness to make brevity the soul of his knowledge. Too often, no matter how interesting his theme or his treatment of it, he defeated his purpose as a writer who was addressing the readers of a daily newspaper. Some of his reviews of plays exceeded two columns in length, and that was enough to exhaust anyone's patience when there was so much else of importance to read in the Transcript.

Somehow, Parker had never been able to pursue a course of academic study to its ultimate destination of a diploma or a degree. He was for a time at Harrow in England, and he entered Harvard in 1886, remaining until 1889, but he did not graduate. It was always a marvel to me that he was content to remain on the Transcript so long, but this was probably because he was allowed by Mr. Mandell to have free rein, and to say whatever he pleased in his columns, no matter what his remarks might be, how offensive were his reflections upon some artist's ability and skill, how independent he might be in his association with his fellow workers, or in his attitude towards those readers who might come to him with a polite request for the insertion of news. All the rest of us, in the turning in of our copy and the make-up of our pages, would be subjected to reasonable restrictions of time and space, but never Parker. For a while he did not begin the writing of his review of a play or concert given the evening before, until the next noon, with the result that no portion of his article would appear in the first edition, a fragment only in the second edition, while the complete review would not appear until the last edition, which came out at four o'clock.

Then all of a sudden he changed his methods, and it was an improvement. He would write his review immediately on his

return to his room in the Hotel Vendome, where he had lived permanently since his mother's death about 1912. When his work was finished, he would take the manuscript down to the hotel office, where it was picked up by a Transcript messenger to be in the hands of the compositors when they began their task in the morning. But that was by no means the end of his labors over an article. He arrived at the Transcript office about noon, and thereafter he would be seen at intervals in the composition room bending over a form and making careful excisions, additions and corrections, some necessary and some not. On Friday evenings, in preparing his pages for the Saturday paper, he would retain a man or two of the make-up force at their job until well after midnight, thereby increasing substantially the extra expense for overtime work. None of the rest of us would be permitted to do that. And his language to the men when he thought they had not treated him with proper respect! Some of them would delightedly tell amusing stories about him. There was even a legend about one unusually mild-mannered man who gave him as good as he sent, and struck Parker dumb.

It would be impossible to do justice to Parker without reference to his handwriting, which was difficult to an almost unimaginable degree. He would not use a typewriter. An effort had been made in the days long ago, when he was in New York, to induce him to master its intricacies; but after having given the machine what I fear was not a fair trial, he abandoned the effort within less than a week, and never returned to it. When he came to be with us in Boston, it was discovered that his penmanship was not so unmanageable if one became accustomed to it by constant reading. A special proof reader was assigned to the task, and she succeeded admirably even if he was not on the spot for ready consultation. She pleased him so greatly that she was given all the theatre passes she wanted, and they were also frequent companions on first nights. Unfamiliar names, especially of European

musicians, were the most refractory to struggle with, and he must be given the credit of trying to be legible in the most disadvantageous circumstances. The typewriter would have minimized the difficulty, but that was not for the incorrigible Parker.

After all, it is really wonderful how typographically excellent Parker's articles were when they came to the eyes of the reader. There were many stories current in the office about Parkerian misprints, but the greater number refer to mistakes only in the proofs, which compositors and correctors were glad to hold in their memories and retail to receptive listeners. The best I remember is one that was wholly due to the blindness of the copy. He had ended an enthusiastic review of one of Bayard Veiller's plays with these words: "Mr. Veiller is rich and risen." It came out in the proof, "Mr. Veiller is sick and sore," and it is to be hoped that it was corrected before the type was put into the forms.

Another story has to do with a note to the manager of the Hollis Street Theatre requesting seats for one of our men. The manager read it, came out from his inner office laughing, and asked: "What do you make of this?" What he read was: "Will you please let the loveless Mr. Clapp have two seats . . ." After due pondering and consultation, the puzzle was at last solved, and what Parker really had written was: "Will you please let the tireless Mr. Clapp have . . ." Mr. Clapp used to tell this story himself with great glee. And so I might go on with this reminiscence of the Parker chirography, but I am not writing a biography of him as a penman. The Parkerian anecdotes are endless, whether he was in the office or elsewhere.

Wherever he might be, H. T. P. was alternately imperturbable and excitable. As he was sitting at his desk one day in his little room on the Milk Street side of the Transcript Building, a manhole cover almost under his window blew off with a resounding roar. Consternation reigned both

within and without, but Parker moved not a hair's breadth, going on with his writing in spite of the noise made by his comrades as they rushed to and fro and looked to see if any damage had been done. None had, least of all to Parker, either mentally or physically, and he uttered not a word as his pen moved steadily over the copy paper before him.

While he was occupying a temporary room whose windows looked down into a narrow alley, he became frantic. Coming in late one Tuesday morning, he seated himself at his desk to write a review of the play he had seen the previous evening; but he remained there only a few moments. There was banging and rattling five stories below him, and after an ineffectual attempt to stop the racket he leaped to his feet, put on his overcoat and hat and left the building. He was not seen again there until Thursday morning to write the belated review, and it appeared that afternoon, two days late. On another occasion, I think in the same room, he found the door locked, sought and could not retrieve his keys, and then in his impatience smashed the glass in the door, turned the handle and entered in triumph, giving imperative orders that the door was never to be locked again.

He was so inveterate a cigarette smoker that the little white roll of tobacco seemed to be an editorial and critical part of himself, especially when the ashes profusely decorated the front of his coat and he made not the slightest attempt to brush them off. He had a habit of dangling the cigarette loosely in the exact middle of his lips so that it wagged as he talked. Once in a while, in his later years, he would substitute a pipe for the cigarette, but he never seemed to be the same H. T. P. with that cumbersome article in his mouth. All these seeming inconsistent attributes made him all the more individual and interesting.

Probably there was never anybody on the Transcript who was so much the object of personal comment and controversy. I do not want to say that he was universally dis-



liked, but it often seemed as if he were trying to be. His appearance and manner were not engaging, and it is nothing but the truth to say that he had more enemies than friends. Neither of these words is exactly correct, for dislike of him did not extend as far as enmity nor did liking imply friendship. He was frequently unapproachable to the extreme of discourteousness, especially if anybody accosted him, even for a good reason, in the midst of his work. Yet he did not hesitate to interrupt anyone in similar circumstances. I have known him to say "Get out of here" simply because he was in that mood at the moment. Many times he would enter my room and speak to me without the slightest apology if I were in close conversation with a visitor, but I would be calm and show no sign of resentment. And he might come up to me, when I was talking with a man he knew as well as I, without giving him the slightest greeting.

To an applicant for theatre passes he would be alternately agreeable and disagreeable. You never knew how to take him. Personally I was never a victim of these eccentricities, for I almost instinctively knew his mood, and did not refrain from availing myself of it. One of his offences, however, I shall never forgive or forget. I had at home a set of Shakspeare in small volumes, one volume to a play, which contained interesting material from commentators. At his request I foolishly lent him two of these volumes, and they were never returned despite my requests. I gave up at last, for I knew what he had done to them. He had torn or cut out the pages that contained the matter he wanted to have reprinted in the Transcript and had sent them up to the composition room as part of his copy for an article he was writing or compiling. I realized that they were gone forever, and that further protest was useless. He had ruined my Shakspeare set without the slightest remorse, but why should I worry? The fault was mine in lending them to so irresponsible a person.

Parker was a small man physically, almost diminutive, very agile in mind and body. He had several nicknames. Whether he knew them, I am unaware. One of these was "Hell to pay," apropos his initials and his excitability. He never hesitated to reprimand conspicuously offenders in an audience who were annoying him and others by talking during a performance. He would even stand in the middle of the street to deride and shake his cane at a policeman who had dared to give him orders. In addition to carrying this cane, he was in the habit of wearing a cape with a red lining, which of course made him a distinctive sight. "That's Parker," many would say, as if he were a celebrity, which he was.

There was a general chorus of regret, both within and without the Transcript, when he died. It was the expression of an honest feeling that he was a loss, and that he could not be replaced. For almost thirty years he had had complete charge of both the music and the drama in the Transcript, editing and writing a large part of his pages. It was exceptional for an editor to write so much; it was also exceptional for one man to deal with both subjects. Almost every daily newspaper of any standing had one man for each art. It was to Parker's credit that he was considered capable of both. The Parker hand and the Parker touch were omnipresent. That portion of the Transcript was pervaded by his personality. It is significant that since his death separate editors have been necessary for the drama and music, and that he has had several successors in each role.

What he wrote and was published in all these very active years would fill innumerable volumes, and much of it would be worth while as a permanent chronicle of and commentary upon those arts. Yet he had had published but one small volume, entitled "Eighth Notes," the significance of which will be readily understood by anyone with only the slightest knowledge of music. Its subtitle is "Voices and Figures of

Music and the Dance," and it is justly dedicated "To G. S. M., who gave me opportunity." This is graceful and gracious, and above all else it is truthful. My copy of Parker's book is characteristically signed in handwriting that could belong to none other: "E. F. E. H. T. P. x/30/23."

I went to Parker's funeral, not through a sense of duty, but for two selfish reasons. One was that the service came at a convenient early afternoon hour; the other that I was curious to see what would happen at the ceremonies over so distinctive a personality. The rooms in an uptown suite of "Funeral Parlors" were filled. I felt instinctively that he would have taken some satisfaction in the proceedings, exigent though he was in life. A large number of his Transcript associates were there, more than I had expected, with many members of the music and drama professions. Some of them came from a distance, for he was a critic of more than local repute.

The officiating clergyman was Dr. Albert C. Dieffenbach, who had been editor of the religious news department of the Transcript for only a short time. He spoke with the fitting reserve of the clergyman who has not known the deceased intimately, without the dreary conventional encomiums. It was one of the most sensible funeral services I ever attended. For some weeks the Transcript contained articles, letters and pictures that evidenced the conspicuous and influential place he had held not merely in the paper itself, but also in the cultural life of the community.

I can think of much more to say about H. T. Parker, but why say more? I have tried to give a truthful and balanced portrait of him as I saw and knew him for forty years. But did I really know him? Few did.

*A Group of American Novelists*

EVER SINCE "The Gentleman from Indiana" and "Monsieur Beaucaire," which came at just the turn of the century, Booth Tarkington has been giving frequent evidence of the resources of the American scene and the American character in his fiction. I have been following it with unflagging interest, and I am here presenting two pertinent letters, one written for him by Mrs. Tarkington while he was under the care of oculists, and the other written by him from his summer home in Maine:

JOHNS HOPKINS HOSPITAL  
BALTIMORE, Sept. 30, 1930

DEAR MR. EDGETT—

I had the very great pleasure of reading your splendid tribute to Mr. Tarkington and to "Mirthful Haven," and he asked me to send you his thanks and deep appreciation. He especially enjoyed your opinion of this book—and he only regrets that he is not able to write you himself. May I add my own great thanks to my husband's and join him in warm best wishes to you. You lightened the dark days more than you will ever know.

Sincerely yours,

SUSANNAH TARKINGTON

SEAWOOD, KENNEBUNKPORT, MAINE

September 9th, 1933

DEAR MR. EDGETT:

I should have written you before this to express my warm appreciation of your most friendly review of "Presenting Lily Mars;" but some physical disabilities have been interfering with my correspondence.

There's very little that one can say in response to a kind opinion of his work except "Thank you." And naturally I am saying that to you with no inconsiderable warmth.

Indeed, I say it not once but repeatedly, and I should be uttering a repetition even had you not been so generous as to repeat your friendly opinion of the book, yourself.

Most gratefully yours,

BOOTH TARKINGTON

\* \* \*

Some years before anyone had heard of "Main Street"—the novel by Sinclair Lewis, I mean—he was writing me letters as head of the publicity department of George H. Doran Company; but even then perhaps the idea of that story was running through his mind. He was writing fiction while he was publicizing the fiction of others, and it was on May 3, 1915, that he wrote to me the following letter:

DEAR MR. EDGETT:

In a few days I shall be sending you, with other important books, the complete Jacob Stahl trilogy, by J. D. Beresford, with a long letter about it. We have finally published the new volume, "The Invisible Event," and have taken over from Little, Brown and Company and are publishing "The Invisible Event" with the first two volumes.

I don't believe there's any case of more unfortunate neglect of a great man than the public has shown toward Beresford. Though the first two volumes of the trilogy were admirably reviewed, they are not at all widely known.

Consequently there is here a chance for a real "literary discovery." The entire trilogy could be reviewed together, with an appraisal of Beresford as a whole, and would make a striking feature.

To find out whether this is worth while, won't you read the trilogy? I want to recommend it—and recommend it personally, not just as the editor for Doran—as one of the most real realistic things for a good many years; and I want to beg you to give it your best attention.

I'll be sending you with the books a note about Beresford himself. If you'd like, I'll also send you Beresford's other book, "The House in Demetrius Road."

Sincerely yours

SINCLAIR LEWIS

This shows the eloquence with which a potential novelist can acclaim the well deserved virtues of an earlier novelist. And now Sinclair Lewis is riding along the Main Street of popularity, principally as a novelist, and sometimes as a dramatist and actor. In popularity, despite his efforts in those years past, I fear that the name and novels of J. D. Beresford are lagging far behind him, although the Beresford reputation is still high, and he continues to be praised by literary commentators, both English and American. He has not yet, however, been invited to share a seat with Sinclair Lewis among the Nobel Prize winners.

\* \* \*

Even though I had reviewed appreciatively Charles G. Norris's first novel, I was surprised when I received the following letter—his first to me—dated from Port Washington, New York, on March 14, 1916:

MY DEAR MR. EDGETT

Frank Adams of the New York Tribune sends me the issue of the Boston Transcript containing your review of my first book, "The Amateur." I cannot begin to thank you for all the encouraging things you find to say of it—and especially for your consideration in failing to mention that I am Frank Norris's brother or Kathleen Norris's husband.

In the midst of my second novel the commendation of the reviewer of the Boston Transcript is a very heartening experience.

I believe that the novel I am writing now is an immeasurably better piece of work than "The Amateur"—and I hope you will find it so. You are generous to pass over the crudities of my first attempt. They scream at me from the pages and if they were as obvious to the conscientious reviewer as they are to me, I fear I should receive only the harshest criticisms.

Accept my thanks for your kindness and my assurance that some day I hope to prove worthy of it.

Sincerely and gratefully

CHARLES G. NORRIS

The second novel to which Mr. Norris refers is "Salt, or the Education of Griffith Adams," published in the year after the writing of this letter. Several other pleasant letters have reached me from him, and among them came a long telegram that unfortunately I am unable to find in my files, although I feel sure it must be there somewhere.

One letter and no more had reached me in 1912 from his wife, Kathleen Norris, who was a popular novelist before Mr. Norris himself decided to venture into that field of fiction. It ran thus:

EDITOR, BOOK REVIEWS,

DEAR SIR,

It is not very often that I have the pleasure and pride that your review of "Mrs. Burgoyne" on November 2nd, gave me. I want to thank you heartily for it, and to assure you that it is a real encouragement and inspiration to me. I am still so new in this work that praise or blame affects me very much—and I feel it a great honor that you found the little book worthy of so discriminating an analysis.

Believe me to be,

Yours very sincerely,

KATHLEEN NORRIS

The salutation shows that she did not know me personally, but that made no difference in the satisfaction the letter gave me. "The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne" appears from the list of her

books in "Who's Who in America" to have been her second, following one of her most admired stories, "Mother," published the year before. Mrs. Norris has been a prolific writer of novels, their number, according to the authority I have just quoted, being no less than fifty-seven. Of all I have read—and by no means have I read all—I liked best "The Story of Julia Page," one of her earliest. The record shows that she has had as many as four books published in a single year! I think that she will not feel hurt if I say that that seems too many for even the most popular novelist to produce in such a brief period.

\* \* \*

I had written a sequence of somewhat antagonistic reviews of two of Louis Bromfield's novels, "A Good Woman" and "The Strange Case of Miss Annie Spragg," and their author had read my opinions with an antagonism that was perhaps so justifiable that he sent me a long letter of rejoinder. I was glad indeed to have him give so much attention to what I had written, and also to the Transcript. Furthermore, I thought it fair to him to be permitted to voice his theories and practice of the art of novel-writing, and I wrote him I should be glad to publish his letter in the Book Section of the Transcript. It filled a column or more, as I remember, and I was careful to see that he should receive a copy of the paper containing it. This is his acknowledgment written from his home in France on December 14, 1928:

DEAR MR. EDGETT:—

Thank you so much for your kind letter of November 27. I appreciated it more than I can say and especially the friendly attitude which inspired it. As I wrote you, I really wanted you to understand what I was driving at and that I did not write of such people from perversity, but because to me at least they exist to a painful degree in our American life. I have a very strong feeling that the greatest weakness of our national character is a fear or a refusal to face facts and come to grips with them. We either pre-



tend that they don't exist or cloud the issue by fantastic legislation. I didn't think we are intellectually honest. No people is, of course, but we're especially bad in that respect.

With best wishes for a good Christmas and New Year, I am  
Yours faithfully,

LOUIS BROMFIELD

Now this is very fair, very frank, and a good example of the proper way to observe the friendly amenities of authorship and criticism. Mr. Bromfield reveals the ability of at least one novelist to receive and respond to what he considered was just and friendly criticism, and he enabled me to understand perfectly his point of view, and his idea of what the theory and practice of a novelist should be. It is evidence of the none too common fact that it is possible to preserve a clear relation between authorship and criticism, and to accept both favorable and unfavorable comment with equal equanimity. I have seldom received so welcome and inspiring a letter from an author, and with Mr. Bromfield's permission I place it on record here.

\* \* \*

Through reading about it in books dealing with actual mysterious murders, I had some knowledge of the Praslin case that had set all Paris, and indeed all France and other parts of the world, a-talking some eighty years ago. When I heard that Rachel Field had written a novel based upon it, I was glad. What gives to her novel, "All This, and Heaven Too," a significant interest is the fact that her great-uncle, the Rev. Henry M. Field, later married Mlle. Desportes, who had been a governess in the ducal Praslin family, and who had been unhappily involved in the mystery.

I could not resist the temptation to write a letter of congratulation to the novelist after I had read her book, and I told her especially how regretful I was that, because I had just left the Transcript, I was unable to write a review of it

for that paper. In this letter I emphasized my appreciation of the skill with which she had so sympathetically mingled fact with fiction, and naturally I was pleased to receive the letter that follows. It was written from Hollywood, whither the novelist had gone to be present during the making of "All This, and Heaven Too" into a motion picture.

DEAR MR. EDGETT:

I am so glad that the advance copy of "All This, and Heaven Too" reached you before publication, and am only sorry that I did not have time to write an inscription on it. The truck strike put us back in getting early copies off, and it was sent to you before I realized it had gone.

I certainly do wish that you might have reviewed it for the Transcript or some other publication, for you have always been so sympathetic to my books in the past, and knowing of the Praslin affair you would have brought a special quality to your criticism. But I am delighted to know that you think well of the book. I meant to acknowledge your November letter before this, but my husband and I have been crossing the U.S.A., and getting settled here has been very absorbing.

Please forgive my tardiness in replying to your letter.

Sincerely,

RACHEL FIELD PEDERSON

All I need add is that Miss Field's novel is historical fiction at its best, especially because its tone, even though it deals with a murder, makes a rare piece of literature relieved of any implication of commonplace emotionalism. It is a study of human nature as well as an effective story. The author depicts the scenes, the incidents and the persons in them as if she were an eyewitness. Some fault-finders might say that she is oversympathetic with the misfortunes of members of her family, but let them say it. The story bears every evidence of truth and justice. It is one of those novels that deserve to be read more than once.

The following letter from a famous American story-teller whose name stands with Mary Wilkins and Sarah Orne Jewett in the first ranks of delineators of New England character refers to an important and somewhat ironic incident of my last years on the Transcript.

October 21st, 1935  
27 WATER STREET,  
NEWBURYPORT

DEAR MR. EDGETT.

I have been told you have resigned from the Transcript. I'm so sorry. But not for you—for now you will have time to look at the evening and the morning and read the books that live. Good luck!

Sincerely yours  
ALICE BROWN

But Miss Brown was misinformed, or only partially informed. I had not resigned, and I never did resign from the Transcript. I was merely moved out of my room, and went with my desk to enjoy the good companionship of Dr. Dieffenbach in his room at the other end of the hallway. I continued my connection with the Transcript by the writing of book reviews and the giving of my weekly broadcasts about books and authors from stations WBZ and WBZA. Then after an interval of six months I returned to my old room for further service as literary editor, in which position I remained two years and a half.

*As Poetry Editor*

ONE OF MY DUTIES on the Transcript, inherited from my predecessor, was to have charge of all the poetry or verses sent in by its loyal readers for publication. It seemed as if every reader at one time or another set himself (often it was herself) down to write a poem. It seemed also as if thousands of others had been told that the Transcript was in search of poetry contributors. The word "poetry" must have been engraved on the minds of all these, although they had no ability to write it. A liking for its reading apparently had aroused a delusion that they might follow in the footsteps of the world's most famous poets.

The amount of this so-called poetry I received was stupendous, and its variety was amazing. It was good, indifferent and bad, some of it so bad as to be comic. We pasted in huge scrapbooks all of it that we printed, and until recently they stood, or were laid, on the topmost shelf of a bookcase that lined one entire side of my room, a monument to the "literary" ambitions of multitudes who thought they were commissioned to enlighten the world as modern successors of Erato and her three sister Muses. Whether these scrapbooks are still there as a part of my old-time room, I do not know; but if they are they are covered with the dust and grime of time and the hour.

It is impressed upon my mind, however, that no matter what their condition, or relative importance, these scrap-books are worth preserving as relics of human endeavor, deserving a niche, or a series of niches, in a library that may readily be consulted. It is a strange trait for so large a number of men and women to think it their duty to write what they describe as "poetry," certain that the world is anxiously awaiting it. Several writers of this sort have been made famous, or rather notorious, by ingenious editors who have deliberately printed their lines in order that they might give holidays of mirth to their readers. One of these was J. Gordon Coogler, who thought he was a great poet because he saw himself so often in the columns of the New York Sun, and another was dubbed "The Sweet Singer of Michigan."

All of us seem at one time or another to be possessed by this mania of poetic ambition. I confess that I once succumbed to its by no means clarion call, and I also am glad to confess that I soon discovered that the trumpet summoning me was decidedly out of tune. The work of finding ideas and contriving rhymes proved altogether too arduous, and I had the common sense before long to see that I neither was born a poet, nor could I achieve even an insignificant greatness in that role. It is a pity that others have not seen the same light, even some of those modernists who have risen to a slight eminence in the hall of poetic fame.

I had eloquent evidence of the futility of trying to write poetry, or even verse, when I was reading the words and words, the lines and lines, and the stanzas and stanzas that came in my mail every day. Few of them found their way into the Transcript. I am sorry now that I did not retain some of these manuscripts in order to make a collection that would reveal the folly of simple-minded egotism they expressed. Perhaps in book form they would be a warning to poetic aspirants who had no justification for their overweening am-

bition. I even had rejection slips printed so that they might be politely returned.

In my efforts to give my readers the best examples of poetry that came my way, I sought to winnow the lot, and it was a very easy task. As Bassanio said of Gratiano, there were usually "two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff," and I certainly did not have to seek all day ere I found them. My predecessor as poetry editor was possessed of a patience and charity that was no part of my mental make-up. He would spend hours in conversation with aspiring poets, giving them advice and striving to amend their verses, while he ought to have had the courage to tell them frankly that their ambitions might be better applied to more sensible work, whether literary or otherwise. In the early days of my taking over this duty, I fear I was not receptive enough to my poetic callers; but I really could not spare the time to invite them to take off their coats and sit down. Indeed, they all too often did that without the invitation. During my many years of handling manuscript verse, the most I gained was a contempt for certain phases of literary ambition, and for the deadly results of the itch for writing.

*The Harvard Theatre Collection*

MY INTEREST IN THE Theatre Collection at Harvard dates back some thirty years to the time when it was housed in a suite of rooms in the Colonial Building on Boylston Street. That collection had its beginnings when Robert Gould Shaw was an undergraduate at Harvard; after being kept in his private residence for some time it increased to such an extent that its removal became imperative, and he thereupon leased the rooms in which I first saw it. Mr. Shaw, who was possessed of ample means to pursue his hobby, was an enthusiastic antiquarian of the theatre, and from its removal to the Harvard College Library in August, 1915, until his death in 1931 he held the title of Honorary Curator, with Mrs. Lillian A. Hall then as now its Custodian.

The rooms that house the Collection are on the top floor of the Library building overlooking a corner of the college grounds with a glimpse of the adjacent Harvard Square. They are commodious and well lighted, and are filled with tables and bookcases and filing cabinets, while upon their walls and also on the walls of the corridors leading thereto are hung many pictures of the heroes and heroines of the stage. Mrs. Hall, who has been connected with the Collection for twenty-nine years, has immediate charge of its vast resources of theatrical memorabilia which include books,

programs, playbills, press clippings, magazines, articles, manuscripts, portraits and anything pertaining to every aspect of the stage, its history and its people. All this material is carefully arranged and catalogued so that it may be readily accessible to everyone delving into the past of the theatre, whether he is connected with Harvard or not. Four large volumes compiled by Mrs. Hall and published by the Harvard University Press contain an alphabetical descriptive catalogue of the engraved portraits in the Collection.

Long ago I began the accumulation of stage material that includes books and pictures. Its principal, most extensive and most valuable portion (from the standpoint of research) is its array of newspaper clippings filed alphabetically in envelopes. This was begun by me in the eighties with the purchase of one small package of oblong brown envelopes, and as the years went on I was buying them by the thousands. The number of cabinets was increased from time to time to half a dozen large ones. How did I acquire these clippings? The greater number were cut by my own hands from newspapers that came to me at first through my connection with the advertising agency where I was employed, and later through my years on the Transcript, and to these were added occasional gifts from friends or as legacies. Everything was grist that came to the mill of my collection.

Gradually these clippings increased in bulk and number, until the cabinets began to usurp space in my house. They were rapidly getting out of bounds, and while I could spare the time for looking through the newspapers, for their cutting and labelling, the job was becoming too great for me to continue their filing in my spare hours. Through Mrs. Hall I offered to give them to the Harvard Theatre Collection, and the gift was accepted, being delivered not at once, but over a period of several years. They are now in the Harvard Library, and thither not long ago went all my theatre material except my books.



Other enthusiasts have also contributed to these stage resources, the largest acquisition coming from Evert Jansen Wendell, who bequeathed his entire collection, which he had been accumulating for decades. It was shipped to Harvard, where all the important material was retained, and the rest, consisting mainly of duplicates, was sent back to New York and sold there at auction, the proceeds being added to the fund for the maintenance of the Harvard Theatre Collection. The auction catalogues comprise six large paper-covered volumes. Among other contributors were John Drew, John Craig, Frank E. Chase of the Walter H. Baker Company, and Henry M. Rogers, a Boston lawyer who was an intimate friend of E. H. Sothorn, E. S. Willard and other eminent actors, and who died not long ago wearing all the honors that come to one who has reached the great age sufficient to be hailed as the oldest Harvard graduate. He died at the age of ninety-eight in 1937.

My envelope arrangement of clipped book reviews from the Transcript for our office use was one of the most serviceable reference features of my department. There was nothing like it for other parts of the paper. These clippings were arranged alphabetically in cabinet drawers along the walls of my room, and for speedy consultation they were vastly superior to the conventional scrapbook systems which require an index with all its time-wasting preparation. I began it when I became literary editor, and it was continued uninterruptedly to the time of my departure, thereby giving a complete record of the book reviews for nearly forty years. It was of great help when the date of a review, or the review itself, was sought, and it was often consulted both for our own use, and in response to requests from our readers. Its value was inestimable.

I accumulated at home another extensive collection of clippings and miscellaneous articles on all subjects not pertaining to the stage, and it too was recently added to the

Harvard Library resources. It formed an important section of my reference material, largely on literary matters, events and personalities, and was of incalculable use to me when I was seeking information that could not be found in encyclopaedias and other reference books. I could immediately step to one of the cabinets containing it and would almost certainly find what I wanted.

I hope this collection of clippings is serving a like purpose for the patrons of the library, whether they be graduates, undergraduates, or anybody who may happen to enter its doors. Once in a while I am now disconcerted by the absence from my home of all these filing envelopes and their contents, but I realize they are of greater general value to the multitudes engaged in research work at the library. As for myself, I may easily step off at Harvard Square on my journey to or from Boston. Like everyone who goes into the Harvard Library, one of the greatest in the world, I know I am always welcome. Mrs. Hall has told me many times that my files of clippings are among the most often sought and the most valuable accessories of the Theatre Collection.

*My Animosities*

SINCE I AM A FIRM BELIEVER in the idea that an autobiography should be a revelation of its author's mind, as well as a record of events in his life, one chapter at least should be devoted to a further statement of my animosities. I use this word because it sounds more dignified and more polite than "hatreds." It happens that I have such firm opinions upon so many and such a great variety of things that I am able here to set down only a few. If I went to their extreme I could easily make a book of only a part of them. But too many would weary their reader, and also myself. So instead of the sixty or six hundred to which I might extend them, I am selecting only six, with a possible glimpse at a few others.

There is little need for me to utter my abhorrence of prohibition, for as a national law it is a dead and gone ideal of an impossible social change which never had its expected results, moral, ethical or financial. It caused an unprecedented revolution in our minds and habits, and defeated the cause it was supposed to foster. It never existed except in name. As we all know, it increased the drinking habit, decreased the quality of liquor and advanced its price. Millions resented its invasion of their personal rights, and made them determined not to obey such an unrighteous law. And it is equally needless for me to say anything against another

futile example of high-minded idealism—the League of Nations—which is as dead as prohibition. Since man is what he is, these and other efforts to reform him are not, and never will be, of the slightest avail.

The six animosities I have selected for a few words of opposition are diversified. They are the Democratic party, labor unionism, football, daylight saving, simplified spelling and revolving doors. Their juxtaposition will doubtless awaken a smile on the faces of all my readers. It does on my own face. I deliberately assemble them here for the sake of variety. I realize that these expressions of my dislike are of no practical use, for they are all here to stay, with the possible exception of simplified spelling. Nothing I or anyone else can say will destroy them, but that does not minimize my opposition to any. Indeed, it stimulates me to speak my mind. I will be as brief as I can, although in speech and writing I might go on forever in voicing my vehement opinions, as many of my friends well know when they have introduced any of these and other subjects in my presence. It is good for my soul to speak thus for myself.

Let me waste but little time and space with the Democratic party. Anyone who has reached this point in my story knows what I think of the political organization that has brought our country almost into the depths of destruction. Eight years of maladministration should be enough. To say more would be to tell a thrice-told story. Let this suffice, for it was the Democratic party that we fought and conquered in 1861–1865, and it should have then been utterly destroyed. Its very name is anathema to me, and to the millions of other Americans who agree with me, but who shrink from speaking their minds so freely and emphatically as I.

Labor unions next. They seem to flourish in some minds first, last and always. They call themselves, and are constantly referred to, as “labor,” implying that none but their

members work for their living. They are the purveyors of perpetual discord wherever they be or whatever they do. They and their actions persistently perturb (this is a mild word) my spirit so violently that I cannot think of them with a calm mind. How can I avoid thinking of them when on the first page of almost every daily newspaper they come before my eyes with news of the trouble they are deliberately creating? They persistently interfere with and seek to destroy many of our liberties. A man, a woman, a child have the right, provided of course they do not obstruct the rights of others (as the labor unions do), to work anywhere, any time, for any payment. To put the matter in few words, there should be no laws, nor even one law, interfering with the right to labor. Even the labor unions are in conflict among themselves, as is evident from the fights between their two most prominent branches and leaders.

Conditions in this country were bad enough before the fateful day in November, 1932, which changed the face of the nation, and made it an autocracy, but they are now a thousand times worse. If you say that the result of that election was the will of a majority of the American people, I say it was not. The people were deceived, as they were again deceived in 1936, and as the attempt is being made to deceive them in 1940. In recent years, new labor laws have been sought, passed and enforced until the people have been put under the overwhelming domination of the labor unions. Even with war almost at our doors, they are making trouble. There seems little necessity to speak about strikes, "sit-down" or otherwise, or about the "closed shop," which is the utter negation of the greatest of human rights, the right of a human being to earn his living even if he does not choose to belong to an organization, a society, a club, a union, call it what you please. I have worked for many years in close association with members of labor unions who know what I think of them; and, however much I may

like some of these men personally, I abominate their labor union principles. And they know it.

In writing about football, I hope I am not repeating myself, for I have already said my say about it in my remarks, some chapters back, upon college sports: Football is not merely a brutal game; it is a death-dealing game, as deadly in a smaller way as the present craze for airplane navigation. The very rules of football are opposed to the prevalent impulse towards safety. It is based upon the natural but reprehensible desire of man to destroy his fellow man. Its goal is injury, its means are violence, and its ultimate purpose is to put a combatant out of action at no matter what cost. It appeals to all that is most deplorable in mankind, and it depraves its spectators as well as its participants.

Football is one of the many evil factors in the life of today. Once they had bear-baiting and cock-fighting, now some countries have bull-fighting, and now all countries have man-baiting and man-fighting. Football should be made a sport of only bitter memory, if the colleges will do their duty. No matter what the opposition by a certain class of students, it can be forbidden. Almost at the moment of this writing, word has come to me through the newspapers that one of the leading American universities is preparing to outlaw it. What should be forbidden altogether is the participation of students in every form of intercollegiate athletic or sporting activity. Then the colleges could devote themselves exclusively to the legitimate objects for which they were established and are managed—study and the acquisition of knowledge.

My other three animosities are minor by comparison with these three major hatreds. Simplified spelling, sometimes called reformed spelling, is an inept and ille  
There is no need for it. Language in all  
time, will adjust itself. Changes in ortho  
other verbal alterations, have been ma

Chaucer and his predecessors. Many of these have been welcome, and some have been unwelcome; but they have not been the results of formal efforts to make words look different. Nor have such efforts been of any permanent value. We see such abominations as "thru," especially on street signs; but the authorized spelling is still "through." There is no need to pay any attention to such atrocities as "naborhood" or "tonite," for they are merely instances of advertising perversions.

The subjects of the last of my two complaints are "daylight saving" and revolving doors. The first is a feeble attempt to persuade persons to get out of bed in the morning an hour earlier under the false impression that they are rising at the usual time. The excuse for this is that thereby they are adding an extra hour of daylight diurnally to their lives. This is too absurd to be argued, for if an extra hour of daylight is given us by this means we could banish darkness altogether by setting the clocks ahead a sufficient number of hours. To call this "daylight saving" is of course a misnomer, for no daylight is saved or gained. The number of hours of daylight or darkness is always the same, no matter what is done to our clocks or watches.

The English call this procedure by the strange words "summer time," which are meaningless, for what time is there in summer but summer time? The fallacy is further emphasized by misstatements as to its origin, which is attributed to Benjamin Franklin. What he really suggested while he was living in Paris was that we get up at sunrise, and he made no mention whatever of interfering with the movement of the hands of timepieces. It was a very practical suggestion by a master of common sense, and it is a pity that his name should thus be taken in vain.

Revolving doors are difficult to push and also a danger to anyone who is forced to navigate them. All who have been injured by them will need no elaboration of my objec-

tions. Others will perhaps exclaim "aren't," or probably "ain't," they wonderful! They certainly are, especially to those who have received a broken wrist or arm from them. All this I have said about the Democratic party, labor unions, football, daylight saving, simplified spelling and revolving doors, may be heresy, which in the words of the immortal Noah Webster, or one of his successors in the making of his dictionary, is defined as "an opinion, held in opposition to the established or commonly received doctrine, and tending to promote division or dissension." All that I need say in reply to a charge of heresy is in the slightly changed words of another immortal American: "If this be heresy, make the most of it."



## *A Trip to the South Seas*

DO NOT BE DECEIVED by this title. I did not go in the flesh. My voyage was merely an imaginary adventure based on history. One of the few motion pictures I took an interest in some five or six years ago was "Mutiny on the *Bounty*," which was derived partly from the annals of the British vessel that sailed from Portsmouth to the South Seas more than a century and a half ago, and largely from the series of three books written by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall at the inspiration of Ellery Sedgwick, then editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. These books are entitled successively "Mutiny on the *Bounty*," "Men Against the Sea," and "Pitcairn's Island." I have lived in mind so completely with the *Bounty* and the Pitcairn Islanders, and their entire story, for half a century of my own life, that I feel justified in giving here as a part of my personal chronicle a comprehensive though much abridged outline of the story.

The *Bounty* was a small ship-rigged vessel of only two hundred and fifteen tons, and under the sponsorship of the British government it put out to sea on December 23, 1787, on a voyage that was to become an epic of maritime history. Its unusual mission was to sail to Tahiti, the largest of the group of the Society Islands in the South Pacific Ocean, in order to gather breadfruit trees for the purpose of convey-

ing them to the West Indies that they might furnish food for the workers on the plantations. The vessel was ordered to sail southward through the Atlantic Ocean and by way of Cape Horn to Tahiti. Baffled by storms and adverse winds, however, it was forced to turn eastward across the South Atlantic around the Cape of Good Hope, and it arrived eventually at Papeete, the capital of Tahiti, on October 26, 1788, ten months after leaving England. It remained there with its officers and crew until April 4th of the following year. Thence, with a full cargo of breadfruit trees, it started on the last and most eventful stage of its voyage.

Trouble had been brewing almost from the start. The captain of the *Bounty* was William Bligh, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy who had served under Captain Cook. He was an efficient sailor, but he was a tyrant and martinet of the old school even in an age when brutal officers were the almost universal rule. At last the inevitable outbreak came. Infuriated by his rigorous and unjust treatment, a portion of the crew under the leadership of Fletcher Christian, the master's mate, seized the ship early in the morning of the twenty-fourth day out from Tahiti, and the captain, with eighteen men from among the officers and crew, were set adrift in an open boat. The other officers and men of the crew, some of whom had taken no part in the mutiny, sailed the *Bounty* back to Tahiti under the command of Fletcher Christian, who was their ablest man as well as their ring-leader.

Attempts have been made to gloss over the character and conduct, and to apologize for the nature of Captain Bligh's dealings with his men, both officers and crew, but it is certain that there would have been no mutiny had he been a sensible and fair-minded officer. While it must be acknowledged that mutiny in itself is a crime and never justifiable, it is no excuse to claim that he was like all the naval officers of his time. In much of his testimony as a witness in Ports-

mouth when some of the mutineers were brought to trial upon their return to England, he was not always truthful. Some years later he became involved in other difficulties while holding high command on shore in Australia.

What happened to Captain Bligh and his eighteen companions in the open boat during their perilous voyage across thirty-five hundred miles of the tempestuous Pacific Ocean to the port of Coupang on the island of Timor in the Dutch East Indies is a story by itself that requires a circumstantial chronicle elsewhere. It is too long to be related in a few pages, and the complete story may be read as it is told with substantial accuracy in the second volume of the Nordhoff-Hall trilogy.

Remaining at Tahiti several months after its return from the scene of the mutiny, the *Bounty*, with Fletcher Christian still in command, sailed away to an unknown destination, and nothing was heard of her for twenty years. Over a year after her departure from Tahiti, those members of the *Bounty* crew who had remained in Tahiti were taken aboard the British ship *Pandora*, which had been sent out from England in quest of the mutineers as soon as the survivors of Captain Bligh's boat journey had reached home. They were treated with extreme cruelty, and four of them were drowned when she was wrecked off the coast of Australia. The survivors were taken to England in another vessel, tried for mutiny; and of them three were convicted and hanged, three were convicted and pardoned, and four were acquitted. Of the second group, it is noteworthy that Peter Heywood, a midshipman on the *Bounty*, soon afterwards entered the Royal Navy, rose to the rank of Post Captain, and was on the list to be made an Admiral when he died in 1831. Lady Belcher, author of a book entitled "The Mutiny of the *Bounty*," was his stepdaughter.

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## *On to Pitcairn's Island*

THIS STORY OF THE *Bounty*, already divided into three sections, now enters its fourth phase. What had become of the eight mutineers who had sailed with Fletcher Christian from Tahiti accompanied by about a dozen men and women of South Seas lineage? Their goal was of course a hiding-place where they might be safe from the wrath of the British government. They knew that death awaited them if they were discovered. After a search for an isolated and yet hospitable refuge, they finally found haven on Pitcairn's Island, a tiny and almost inaccessible dot in the midst of the vast wastes of the South Pacific Ocean one thousand miles southeast of Tahiti and not far from the Tropic of Capricorn.

The story of what happened to them and their descendants is long and romantic, and is continuing even into these middle years of the twentieth century. Not until 1808 were they again seen by human eyes, and then because of the arrival of an American whaling ship. Some time later a succession of British vessels arrived at intervals; but Britain was engaged in important wars and had no time to transport them back to England so long after the mutiny. John Adams was the only mutineer alive, the patriarch and head of the community. Since he was scarcely more than a boy at the time of the mutiny, he could not have been, even at

the time of his death, the venerable old man of many of the Pitcairn stories. All that has been revealed of what happened on Pitcairn after the arrival of the *Bounty* is derived from his oral narratives, and they were not always consistent, at least as they are recorded.

John Adams lived until 1829, and the population of the island was increasing slowly. By 1852 it had risen to such a number that its resources were becoming restricted, and at their own request they were therefore taken in a British government vessel to Norfolk Island, which was much larger and nearer to New Zealand and Australia. Soon thereafter, homesickness for Pitcairn recalled a few families to their old home; others followed now and then, and the descendants of the mutineers are now divided between the two islands, with the larger number on Norfolk. They are of course a mingling of two races, the British and the South Seas natives, with a sprinkling of others who have made their homes there from far-away parts of the globe. Many of their customs and much of their language is English, and in religion they are Second Adventists.

Much and more about all this may be read in the Nordhoff-Hall chronicles, and in other books that relate the story variously as fiction, as fact, and as fiction mingled with fact. Through the years, the *Bounty* and Pitcairn bibliography has become extensive, and it is growing annually. Especially valuable are the volumes written by Dr. Harry L. Shapiro of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. He has made a scientific study of the subject that took him on two journeys to the South Seas, one to Norfolk Island and the other to Pitcairn, where he lived among its people during Christmas week of 1934.

My interest in and knowledge of the *Bounty* and Pitcairn story has been increased and intensified through all the years since I came across an account of it in a bound volume of Harper's Magazine for 1872. This was derived from the

book by Lady Belcher, and is illustrated with some striking pictures of Pitcairn scenes and persons. In its entirety and in all its details the story has lingered in the forefront of my mind, and in pursuit of my hobby I have accumulated and assembled all sorts of printed and written material dealing with its aspects. This is readily accessible to me in a special cabinet drawer, and rare and puzzling indeed must be any question about it that I am unable to answer.

An important part of my *Bounty* records is mounted on book-size sheets by the ingenuity and skill of my friend Herbert Jackson. This *Bounty* collection is well on its way towards completion for binding, but there is yet much to do. I have not been able to complete my typewritten records that contain every possible available fact in the sequence of the story, in its incidents, its chronology, its personages, beginning with the acquisition of the *Bounty* by the government for its voyage, and thence coming down through 153 years to the present day when radio messages, some of which I have listened to, come from and are sent to Pitcairn. I am unable to foresee when these records will be complete, and I have my doubts as to that day in the midst of all the work I have to do, including the preparation for and the writing of this autobiography. In the meantime I am continuing to live with and myself form a part of the wonderful *Bounty* story and everything that pertains to it.

The *Bounty* motion-picture that stirred my reminiscent mind so overwhelmingly was unexpectedly truthful, romantic and realistic, the essential details being shown and narrated with vigor and plausibility. By it the story was brought to the attention of many who had never heard of it, but it is doubtful if more than one person in a hundred of all the multitudes that witnessed it throughout the country were aware that they were looking upon a representation of incidents that really happened, and upon modernized portraiture of men and women who were once flesh and blood.

It was announced immediately after the showing of the *Bounty* picture that a sequel dealing with the Pitcairn's Island portion of the story would be made; but if it was begun it has never been finished.

Mr. Nordhoff and Mr. Hall ought to put their hands to the helm again and go on with the story from the point where they left it on Pitcairn's Island when John Adams was relating the account of the exciting incidents during the fateful years after the arrival of the mutineers and their Tahitian companions. There still remains more than a century of events after the death of John Adams, during the custodianship of the Rev. Mr. Nobbs while they were in temporary residence in Tahiti, and since the removal of the entire community to Norfolk, with something of course about the returned members of the families whose descendants are now living on Pitcairn. In fact there should be more than one more book about them; there should be two or three.

*What I Have Not Been*

I HAVE SAID SO MUCH about what I am and what I have been that the time has come when I must say what I have not been. I have not been a clubman, a churchgoer, a go-getter, a joiner, an office seeker or holder; I do not want to belong to any secret societies or boards of directors, or to any organization that I think may bring me prestige or influence, whether fame or fortune. I do not want to be a factor in the midst of mankind. I want to be left to myself; I prefer to work alone. In short, I am an individualist, a lover of my fellow men, but not of all of them. I prefer to pick and choose my acquaintances, and not to have them thrust upon me.

I have lived for thirty-five years in the Massachusetts town of Arlington, about eight miles from Boston, and I have never entered any of its churches of any denomination, except twice, and then only as an attendant at funerals. They were Baptist and Unitarian. I am a voter, but I have no ambition to be voted for as an incumbent of any office, from selectman to pound keeper. I have never been drawn on a jury, I am glad to say, and now I am not wanted for that service, I am even more glad to say. I have neighbors, but I am not obtrusively neighborly, and my visits to their houses number less than a half-dozen annually. I seldom go out to



dinner, although I like to dine with friends at Boston restaurants.

On the other hand, I like to have friends come to my house to dinner with us, and that happens often. By that expedient I save myself the trouble of travelling back and forth between our homes. I rarely speak to a stranger for the sake of scraping acquaintance, but I am glad to have a stranger speak to me, especially if he is seeking information. I despise what many like: automobile radios, rubber-heeled shoes, low shoes, bifocal glasses, slang of all kinds, snowless winters, comic strips, calendar reform, pacifism, weather reports, the flagrant misuse of such words as "transpire" and "replica," and the omission of the first two syllables of "telephone."

Speaking of funerals, I never attend one if I can possibly avoid it. Of course there is one that I shall be forced to go to. I doubt if I have been to more than twenty in the progress of my life, which is less than one in three years. They seem to me to be unnecessary, and I know that many are based upon hypocrisy. They are of no value to the dead, and of little value to the living. Many who attend them do so because they will be considered unfriendly and discourteous. Too often the services are sheer humbug, especially when the clergyman eulogizes the character of a person of whom he knows nothing. You may have heard the story of the man who went to the funeral of a friend who was described from the pulpit as a man of the most substantial and highest character. Suddenly he leaped from his seat and dashed out of the room. "Why did you leave?" he was asked afterwards. "Because I found out I must have gone to somebody else's funeral, for it couldn't possibly be Charlie Jones who was so highly praised by the minister. He wasn't that kind of man, and I wouldn't have liked him if he had been."

My personal recollections of even the few funerals I attended are vivid. I had a dear friend who was an actor, a

most lovable man. He was a Bostonian by birth, Horace Lewis by name, fifty years of age at the time of his death, and I had come to know him when he was a member of the Castle Square Theatre stock company. I knew also his entire family—his wife Portia Albee who had been a celebrity as a child actress at the Boston Museum years before, his son and two daughters. What did the preacher imply about him at the service, even though he was speaking in a church of the denomination to which Horace and his family belonged? The best he could say of him was that he was a worthy man in spite of the fact that he was an actor! Condescending, wasn't it? One of the most monotonous funerals at which I was present was held in memory of a fellow worker on the Transcript, Jay B. Benton, who had been its city editor. It was held in a church in the town where he had resided many years, and it was considered essential to have three clergymen to speed him on his way. One of these was the pastor of the church, another a member of the order to which my friend belonged, and the third a former reporter on the Transcript who had left journalism for the pulpit. The pastor read interminably long passages from the Bible that I should have enjoyed more had I remained at home and perused them in its quietude.

Is it any wonder that I do not like funerals? The best sort of service is the impersonal one; and there are varieties of the worst, especially when the deceased is portrayed as a saint who is making his easy progress through the gates of heaven. This reacts upon the clergyman, who seems to be overconfident about what is happening in the other world.

Something I have not been is a clergyman, although I have been accused of being a member of that profession. Rarely, if ever, have I been taken for an actor. Possibly there is good reason from my personal appearance to be considered as one or the other. In my maturer days I have been addressed or saluted as a preacher so often that its repetition

has become annoying, especially as I dislike to be taken for something that I am not. In denominations there has been no discrimination. The choice has been eclectic—Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Universalist, Congregationalist and Unitarian, these I remember, and unquestionably there are others.

Out of deference and reverence, little boys take off their hats to me, sometimes with the addition of the word "Father." Men and women, some older than I, get up or motion me to a seat when I am standing in a street car or a subway train; I am offered discounts in stores, or asked if I am "clerical"; and I am addressed as "Dr.," presumably of the D.D. variety. One evening a young man sidled over to me as we were seated in a sparsely filled car, and said, "I'm afraid my breath is offensive to you, Father—I've been drinking." An unnecessary confession, for I had been unaware of his proximity. Occasionally my "fellow clergymen" stare at me in passing as if they felt they must know me, or else they bow to me as if I were a man of their cloth.

Even at funerals I am not immune. Entering the crematory chapel at Forest Hills Cemetery one afternoon to attend services over a friend, I was taken by the hand of the undertaker, who evidently wanted to escort me up the aisle; but I declined the honor and sat in a rear pew: I failed to see the reason for this ceremony, but on my relating the incident to my wife at home, she responded: "Why, don't you know, he took you for the officiating clergyman!" In spite of all this, I was content to remain an editor.

*Some of My Associate Reviewers*

OVER AND OVER I have encountered remarks implying that I, and I alone, since I was literary editor of the Transcript, wrote all, or substantially all, the book reviews in its pages. This was a misunderstanding, and I always rebutted it, giving reasons for my denial. How could one person read the hundred and more books we received each week, and also write about them in an understanding and lucid manner? It could not have been done by even a small corps of writers. I needed assistance, and it was readily obtainable, for the supply of reviewers always exceeds the demand. Scarcely a day passed when I was not receiving a young man or woman who asked me if I did not need another reviewer.

Did I need another? Not by any means. I tried to be hospitable. I was certainly courteous, and sought to explain the situation. Sometimes I was acquiescent, and sometimes not, depending upon the personality of my visitor, and perhaps upon my mood at the moment. It was often easy by merely looking at and listening to an applicant to foresee that his work would be impossible. I venture to say that not one in ten of them returned, doubtless disheartened by my unreadiness to accept their offer of services, or by my noncommittal attitude.

The incentives of these applicants were variable. Some

were college undergraduates anxious to gain experience and perhaps prestige from published writing, and the large number of colleges in and around Boston furnished plenty of them. My associates introduced some of them personally or by letter; others had undoubtedly heard wild stories that I needed more assistants; some needed to earn a little money and went away disappointed that book reviewing is not generally remunerative; some said (there were many of these) that they did not care if there were no financial result. I confess that once in a while I may have deprived myself of the aid of one who might have been a star reviewer. What happened was more the outcome of chance rather than of good judgment.

I certainly acquired a helpful staff. Of course it was constantly changing through the years. I should dread to count the number of those who left me for no other reason than that they left the world. I could not give to everyone exactly the books he desired. You may ask if I did not regret parting with books that I wanted to review and read myself. Certainly I did, but I could not help myself. That was one of the drawbacks of the profession. It was my duty to put all worth-while books through as quickly as possible.

To all these reviewers, as I summon their names from my memory, I offer my gratitude and thanks, confessing frankly that I could not have gone on with my work without them, and that to them I attribute whatever measure of success I may have achieved in my nearly forty years as head of the Transcript department of book reviewing, and for the popularity gained by the Book Section under my control. At any rate, no literary editor of the Transcript ever served so long as I, and none retired with a happier view of his past. But though I was the editor, I was only one among many reviewers, and I was willing to take all the blame for anything that might have gone wrong, and to share the credit with my assistants and associates.

Let me mention a few names that in my regime appeared frequently as signatures to reviews. During my first years, none of the reviews was signed, even with initials. Then I adopted the system of giving reviewers the credit of their initials, and finally I printed their names at the head of all the more important reviews. The order in which I set down their names here, as they appear through the years from 1901 to 1938 has no significance. They are placed merely as they enter my mind, sometimes with no forethought, and sometimes as memory recalls them while I strive to discover if anybody who deserves a place is omitted.

Christopher Morley, whom I have mentioned elsewhere at some length, wrote for me many entertaining essays and special articles, among his reviews, at the beginning of his rapidly ascending career soon after his return from Oxford. Edmund Lester Pearson did *The Librarian* department once a week for a longer time than I can remember, and so original and humorous was he that a group of librarians sent us a protest and asked us to replace him with a more practical writer who would sacrifice an enlivening style for mere dry-as-dust facts. We would not under any consideration deprive our readers of his unique writing, and it was only his decision to relieve himself of a burdensome task that forced us to give him up. All this time he had been writing an occasional review in which his whimsical humor was dominant, and at the time of his death three years ago he was at the height of his reputation as a chronicler and solver of murder mysteries. For thirty years, George Henry Sargent, the eminent and authoritative writer of *The Bibliographer* department, could be depended upon to have his weekly column ready in time, even in his last days when he was an invalid living in semiretirement on the old Sargent family farm in New Hampshire. He was an able reviewer of books of all kinds, as well as in his specialty of bibliography.

Always I had the aid of reviewers whose liking for books

carried them into variable fields. Frank S. Ambrose was most reliable as to the speed and quality of his work, and he was notably fond of historical personalities and events to be found in the byways of literature and biography; Sherwin Lawrence Cook, who died some half-dozen years ago, liked best to write about the stage and political history, and during his last years was on the teaching staff of Emerson College; Nathan Haskell Dole was indefatigable and voluminous in his writing, with the rare faculty of knowing Russian and other European languages and literatures.

These are not all, by any means. There was James Walter Smith, who was my intimate friend from before my Harvard days, a far-travelled journalist and magazine writer of exceptional capacity and resource who worked both in England and in this country; later came his son, J. Fletcher Smith, duplicating the ability of the father as writer and reviewer. Jean West Maury's scope was extensive, and she was thoroughly versed in many subjects and eager to write upon them; Louise Hubert Guyol was one of Edmund Pearson's successors on *The Librarian*, one of her avocations being the writing of stories for children; and Dorothea Lawrance Mann, one of several Wellesley graduates on my staff, with an amazing facility over a wide range of literature, old and new.

Among the Radcliffe graduates who assisted me was Isabelle Wentworth Lawrence, as vivacious in her literary style as she was in her personality, and Dorothy Foster Gilman, who had travelled over three continents, and who for two years wrote a semiweekly news column for the *Transcript* entitled *Bookstall Gossip* that brought her into close contact with publishers and their representatives. Mrs. Florence Milner diversified her work as curator of the Farnsworth Room in the Harvard Library, with travel, with reading and the reviewing of as many worth-while books as I could give her. In this list of my feminine reviewers stands Dr. Ger-

trude R. B. Richards, conspicuous as a teacher, a writer and a scholar whose specialty was research into the mysteries of ancient Italian books and manuscripts, and who discussed many books with a rare insight into their varied themes. Olga Owens was my chief assistant reviewer during my last two years as literary editor, and was of great help to me in the manifold duties of my work. She remained after my departure.

To begin this paragraph, I have in mind the name of William E. Harris, a teacher who was careful in his selection of books, and remarkably thorough in his evaluation of them, with an inclination at times to be censorious in his judgments, which was far better than to be easy-going and fond of needless praise. Another teacher-reviewer was Sigmund Arnold Lavine, whom I had known since his infancy, and whom I had watched grow up from small beginnings as a reviewer of second-rate novels to a skilful student of historical affairs, high-class fiction, economics and sociology; Ralph Bergengren was a reviewer whose whimsicality made everything he wrote entertaining, and who was even able to write with extraordinary humor about such reference books as the Dictionary, the Cumulative Book Index, the Book Review Digest and Who's Who in America. It was he who made the marvellous discovery that in one of these were entries of two men whose names were Deadman and Liveing.

One of the most conspicuous among my reviewers was Edmund Noble. He was long on the staff of the Boston Herald, and his writing for the Transcript gave him the chance to obtain books on history, biography, science, philosophy and other subjects that he would not otherwise have been able to procure. His work was extensive, and it continued to within a few days of his death. Arthur Bernon Tourtellot came in to see me for the first time with the news that he had just returned from London, where he had been able to listen to one of my radio talks by short wave. Soon there-



after he began to write for me with an ease and facility that revealed his facility to get out of books the best that was in them.

And there were others in whose visits I took great pleasure. William Fox made life agreeable for me with calls that diversified his days spent in a broker's office, and by reading and writing about books he selected with a care that showed he did not want to take from my shelves a book simply because it was a book. We have kept up our acquaintance since I left, and so also have Thomas S. Lester and myself. He too liked to have a talk with me when he took his noon hour off from a business house with which he was connected, and his choice of books for review was always judicious. Frances Bartlett in spite of her long invalidism spent much of her spare time during her last few years in reading new books and writing some of the most careful reviews that came into my hands. She became a welcome guest at our home.

Although he was one of the earliest of my associates in point of time, William Stanley Braithwaite appears somewhat belatedly in this chapter. He was the originator and compiler of the "Anthology of Magazine Verse" which appeared annually in the Transcript in abridged form, and later in a series of volumes that were continued for about ten years; his reviews of books of verse need no praise. After him must be set Edward J. O'Brien, not as a reviewer, but as the founder of the Best Short Stories of the Year. It was suggested by me, and I did not foresee that it would be the beginning of a long series of annual articles in the Transcript and the progenitor of volumes that have continued for twenty-five years. Mr. Braithwaite has left Boston to become a teacher in a southern college, and Mr. O'Brien long ago set up his permanent residence in England, where he combines his walks amid Oxford scenes with the reading of an incalculable number of short stories.

Again I return to the Transcript staff for the name of an-

other reviewer—Karl Schriftgiesser—who came to us from an office boy's job on the Boston Post, and then worked upward in steadily advancing capacities for ten years or so, when he left us for other newspaper fields, first to go to the Washington Post, and then in January, 1937, to the New York Times, where he is now, in the good company of several other former Transcript men, among them Brooks Atkinson, Henry R. Illsley, W. A. MacDonald, and Wallace M. Powers. Another former Boston newspaper man, Olin Downes, is also on the Times as its music editor. Of Karl's ability I cannot speak too highly. Besides contributing to the Book Section, he substituted for me several summers when I was away on my vacation. My recollections of him have a touch of amusement because of the fact that he would occasionally come to me with a request for the meaning of a German word which, because of his name, if for no other reason, he might be supposed to know better than I.

From the composition room came frequently Julius Adelberg to look over the new books with an appraising eye. He was most exigent in his choice, but he discovered one once in a while that satisfied him, and would do the review of it with sound judgment. A number of our workers in all departments were members of the bar, and he was one of them. Also to be recalled are a trio of careful ministerial reviewers—Thomas C. Richards, Frank W. Collier and Frederick B. Noyes. I enjoyed the visits of Marion L. Starkey, to whom I would send books for review when she was away from Boston teaching at the Hampton Institute in Virginia. She was fond of travelling, as far westward as the Pacific coast, and when she returned one summer from an eastward journey into Russia, she came in with her arm in a sling as a result of an accident while swimming in the Black Sea.

During the last phase of my Transcript service, John Holmes, poet and teacher at Tufts College, was an acquisition to the staff, and of distinct aid to me in his opinions

upon poetry and poets. William H. Clark was diligent in writing brief reviews ranging from fiction to erudite scientific books; Fred C. Green took great pleasure in reviewing books about the sea and ships; Lewis E. Stoye enjoyed good fiction, but his specialty was photography, in which he was an exceptionally expert practitioner; Lewis L. Martinson and Oliver Hewitt were always welcome; Margaret Paige Hazen never took a book without being sure she could master its contents; and Gertrude Bayley and Florence E. Whittier were notable for the conscientious care with which they read and wrote.

With only two or three exceptions, none of these reviewers was considered worth retaining on the book reviewing staff when I left. Most of them did not have any lasting regrets, and neither had I. They were a trained corps in the art of reviewing, and they knew and wrote about books both old and new with all the skill that comes of long study and practice. I am sure they will long be remembered in these days when their names have vanished from the pages of the Transcript Book Section.

One other remains to be spoken of, with a side glance at a few of my intimate friends who were with me well on into the fortieth decade of the twentieth century. Forrest P. Hull was long a valued and versatile member of the Transcript reportorial staff. He was a Yankee born and bred. His birth, his home and his death were all in the little Massachusetts town of Georgetown up near the New Hampshire line, not far from Haverhill. He would go there almost daily from Boston, where he worked many years, and where he kept a lodging for occasional occupancy. He rarely went to the theatre, and seldom read a work of fiction, although he surprised me once in a while by revealing acquaintance with a recent popular novel. He was active in the local affairs of his home town, being president of its savings bank, one of the officials of its public library, and the author of its

published history. He was the Transcript's City Hall representative; he also specialized in hotel news; and he wrote the reports of the Lowell Institute lectures that are a feature of the cultural life of Boston. He took great pride in these, and especially in the fact that a condition of the charter of the institution was that its lectures should always be advertised in the Transcript, and in no other Boston newspaper.

Forrest Hull's world was wide, in spite of the local nature of his newspaper work, and he was enthusiastic about his special interests. He was fond of books on government and municipal affairs, and his sudden death about a year ago was a blow to all his friends, many of whom were, like himself, no longer on the paper. A week or two after being forced to leave us, he was appointed editor of the City Record, the official organ of the Boston municipal government, and in that office he had additional duties to perform.

I have every good reason to remember him with affection. He was one of a small group of Transcript workers who dined together once a month or so at a Boston restaurant, and who met and talked with one another almost every day. This group consisted, in addition to Forrest and myself, of Charles E. Alexander, society editor of the paper for many years, who was always our host in his apartment on Marlborough Street at the preliminary gatherings on the evenings of our regular dinners; John Henry Wilson, whose specialty on the staff was obituaries and church affairs; and Frank C. Bowker, its city editor, who died untimely in his fiftieth year a dozen years ago. In later years we were joined by Charles F. Marden, long-time automobile editor of the Transcript; and we had with us occasional guests from among our fellow workers. Frank Bowker was the youngest of us, and with Forrest Hull's leaving the second youngest was removed. It is worth noting that the span of the ages between the oldest and the youngest was eighteen years.

When word came to Forrest in September, 1938, that I

too was to join him in the ranks of the Transcript departed, he telephoned me immediately that he had heard the news, and that whenever I was in Boston I was to make my headquarters in his office in the City Hall, using his telephone, his typewriter and everything within its walls as if they were mine. That hospitality has been continued by his associate and successor, Joshua H. Jones, than whom I could ask for no more cordial and helpful friend. As I sit there in his office he seems indeed to be a friend of everybody, especially of the many visitors who come to him for practical advice and assistance. Within the past year or so I have visited him once a week, always sure of a hearty welcome and many minutes of conversation on what seem to be all subjects within the range of the human mind.

*Letters and Richard Mansfield*

AS I NEAR THE END, and look back over the past as I have recorded it, my readers have doubtless seen that not the least interesting, and sometimes the most exciting, event in my daily work was the receipt of my mail, which came not long after my arrival in the early morning, and continued also at regular intervals throughout the day. With the mail came a realization of my widespread contacts with those who write and those who read, as well as with the publishers without whom we should have no books. Through all my years, my mail was one of the most absorbing features of my work. Among other things, it was made up of the reactions of Transcript readers towards me.

Sometimes my letters were personal, sometimes they were impersonal, sometimes they were friendly, sometimes they were unfriendly, sometimes they were mild and genial, and sometimes they were vehement and antagonistic. But always they were welcome. Whatever their nature, they proved that the Transcript had plenty of readers who were so interested in what they read that they were impelled to write about it. I was responsible for everything that went into my pages, and I was willing to take whatever blame was justly due me for the judgment of others, gladly receiving now and then a word of praise for the alert editorial hand I strove to wield

over the assignment of books for review, over the editing of the reviews, and over the arrangement, technically known as the "make-up," of my pages.

Many letters received during more than forty years were read and preserved, and many others were also read, but not thought important enough to retain for re-reading. Had I foreseen the writing of this book, I might have saved more of them, in order that they might fulfill its purpose more completely. In any event I still have plenty. Some have already been presented to my readers where they seemed to fit in best; others will now be set down here in more or less logical sequence. In the first of these letters I am going back to the days when I was dramatic editor of the Transcript.

It was written by Richard Mansfield when he was at the height of his reputation, not long after he had called special attention to himself as the first producer in this country of a Bernard Shaw play—"Arms and the Man," followed by "The Devil's Disciple." His new play for that season was "The First Violin," a dramatization of Jessie Fothergill's novel of the same title made especially for him, but which did not remain long in his repertory. I saw its opening performance at the Hollis Street Theatre, wrote a review of it which appeared in the Transcript the following day; and apparently he sat down to write the letter immediately after reading it.

The author of "The First Violin" was an Englishwoman of some popularity as a novelist in the seventies and eighties, and her story dealt rather sentimentally with musical life in Germany, the principal figure, played by Mr. Mansfield, being the leader of an orchestra in Düsseldorf. The novel had been published some twenty years previously, in 1877, in the conventional English three-volume form, and was one of Miss Fothergill's dozen or so works of fiction that brought her a temporary renown.

Mr. Mansfield had never met me, which accounts for the

formality of his salutation. The envelope containing the letter was addressed to me by name, although the review had not been signed.

PARKER HOUSE,  
April 22, 1898

MY DEAR SIR—

I am greatly obliged to you for your very wholesome letter. If you have nothing better to do please join me at supper Saturday after the play & I will explain fully to you many things. The consensus of opinion on the part of the Boston press was somewhat remarkable and the more puzzling that it has been so diametrically opposed to the evident opinion of the public. "The First Violin," when it closes on Saturday evening, will have played at the fag end of the season to the extraordinary figure of over \$12,000 in one week!

The fact is the Public likes to be entertained—it does not care for problem plays & the old song always tells. I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you on Saturday.

RICHARD MANSFIELD

I do not recall what my "very wholesome letter" was about, but it must have been in answer to a letter from him which unfortunately has disappeared. I accepted his invitation, joined him at midnight, and found at the Parker House a small gathering that included Arthur Forrest, his leading man, A. M. Palmer, his manager, formerly a prominent influential theatre manager in New York, and E. H. Clement, then editor in chief of the Transcript. I had an enjoyable time there, and was glad to reach my home at such an ungodly hour, for me, as three o'clock in the morning. I was not accustomed to being out so late, despite the fact that newspaper men are supposed to be night-birds.

I am not regretful to say that I have participated in few such midnight occasions. The only other I remember—and my memory of these affairs is good—was a midnight supper of about twenty guests at the Hotel Touraine given to Frances Starr by David Belasco at the time of her debut in



"The Rose of the Rancho." In the party was Jane Cowl, then unknown to fame, and acting only a minor role in the new drama. From that event I arrived home late, again at about three o'clock in the morning.

In this connection, it seems incumbent on me to say a few words about Richard Mansfield as an actor. I fear he is unknown to the present generation of playgoers, and little more than a memory to some of their elders. He is, however, much more than a memory to me and to many others who were going to the theatre in those days. As I look at him through the veil of the years, he is not what William Winter was wont to call a shadow of the stage, but a lifelike and enduring figure. His intellectual and physical stature grows upon me as remembrance revivifies him. I saw him more than once act Baron Chevrial in "A Parisian Romance" and Beau Brummel in Clyde Fitch's play on successive evenings, and I marvelled then as I marvel now in recollection at the skill—it may have been genius—with which he differentiated them and made them two absolutely opposed individualities. There were few traces of the one in the other, and what is more there were few traces of Richard Mansfield. It was real acting and genuine character, and in each case he revealed the spirit of the man he was acting. Memory brings him forth in other parts, but these dominate them all.

*Some Last Letters*

IN VIEW OF LATER EVENTS in American literary and political history, the following letter, dated from 201 West Twenty-eighth Street, New York, December 20, 1901, has a peculiar and prophetic interest. It came addressed to the Transcript, and since it pertained to my department, it was turned over to me.

DEAR SIR:—

I beg to introduce myself as the author of "King Midas," a romance just published by Funk & Wagnalls Company. I enclose a few extracts from letters and from the first press notices I have received. I desire to offer my services, in case you should find them available, as a reviewer of fiction, a subject of which I have made a study. I am a college graduate, and have done four years post graduate work in literature and philosophy at Columbia; I read French, German and Italian fluently, and I know the modern literary field with some thoroughness. I am authorized by Professor Brander Matthews to state that he will recommend me to anyone who applies to him—that I have done much of my work under his direction, have shown myself capable and diligent, and that he considers me competent for the work in question.

Respectfully,

UPTON SINCLAIR

Mr. Sinclair did not long confine his literary work to book reviews, but proceeded to write many books for others to

review. After the publication of "The Jungle" in 1906, especially aided by the publicity given to it by Theodore Roosevelt, then president of the United States, he rose in reputation as author and political worker, and quite recently he has added to his celebrity by his activities in California, of which state he has long been a resident. His interests have been varied, he is energetic in pursuit of any political or social cause that he has taken to his heart, his points of opposition or attack cover a wide field, and include such matters as the American systems of education and our schools, high finance, labor conditions, oil, poverty and the depression. He has written novels, short stories, plays and essays on economics, social and political problems. Wherever there is what he thinks is a wrong to be righted, he makes it his target with persistent energy and vehemence.

\* \* \*

I have had in my possession for a long time a short and pertinent letter from W. J. Locke, whose sparkling tales added to the gaiety of at least two nations of novel readers over a period of more than thirty years. I therefore wrote to his widow (he died in 1930) for permission to give this letter a place in these pages. She responded cordially, and here it is:

CORNER HALL  
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HERTS  
4th September, 1918

DEAR SIR—

I deserve your paragraph's humorous censure on "The Cloud," but Tom Hood did write "The Last Man," the concluding lines of which are

For there is not another man alive  
In the world to pull our legs.

The Tom Campbell quip is therefore a "dud."

Yours faithfully,  
W. J. LOCKE

The cause of this letter was a paragraph I wrote for the Transcript in which I reprimanded Mr. Locke for what I thought was the attribution, in one of his books, of two poems to the wrong authors. In one case I was right, and in the other I was wrong, for I knew that Thomas Campbell did write a poem entitled "The Last Man," but I had never seen the other one of the same name by Thomas Hood, the first being very serious and the other comic. Of course I was glad to be set aright, especially in such a genial manner. It is to be hoped that Mr. Locke's "The Beloved Vagabond," "The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne," "The Glory of Clementina," and all his other novels, and also his volumes of short stories, are still enjoyed in these modern days.

\* \* \*

At intervals I would receive a letter from Amy Lowell, and once in a while she was so gracious as to send me an inscribed copy of one of her books. Her letters were very practical, and perhaps the best for me to select is this in answer to my request that she write a first-page Book Section article for the Transcript. When writing a letter on a professional matter she generally used letter-sheet stationery upon which appeared in the upper left-hand corner these formal printed words: "Miss A. Lowell, 70 Heath Street, Brookline." This came to me in typewriting, dated May 4, 1923:

MY DEAR MR. EDGETT:

I wish I could say yes to your request that I write one of the leading articles for the Transcript book page in the near future. Unfortunately I have had to refuse to write any articles of any kind until I finish my life of Keats, at which I am working at forced speed, as the publishers are anxious to publish it as soon as possible. I am very sorry, as I should like to write an article for you very much, but as I have steadily refused to write anything for the "Post," "Times," or the "International Review," for all of which I am an irregular but steady contributor, I am afraid the editors of these papers would not think me particularly loyal

to them if I were to write for the "Transcript" when I distinctly told them I could do nothing until my book was done.

If you will allow me, I will let you know some time when I shall be able to write such an article, and you will let me know if it is at a moment when it would be acceptable to you.

Very sincerely yours,

AMY LOWELL

Two years after the writing of this letter, Miss Lowell died, and the time therefore never came when she was "able to write such an article" for the Transcript.

\* \* \*

Of all the authors whose books I have reviewed, I think none was so punctilious as Gamaliel Bradford in his desire to send its writer a letter of acknowledgment. I have many of these letters from him in my collection, but instead of printing one here, I am presenting one that deals with his ambitions as a writer of plays, which he never fulfilled. He wrote me from his residence in Wellesley Hills, under date of August 9, 1908:

DEAR MR. EDGETT:

I was very much interested in your study of Bronson Howard which shows, what of course I had felt before, your uncompromising opposition to the drama of trickery—shall I call it so?—and belief in the drama of life, which regards the laws of dramatic art, essential as they are, as only means to an end.

I wonder if you would be willing to read, at your leisure, a play which I finished a few months ago. It is a simple, direct study of contemporary life, made as clearly and directly dramatic as I know how to make it, but I hope not stagey. I am negotiating for production in New York through one of the dramatic bureaus; but I am not hopeful. I have too little personal relations with theatrical people and besides the play is too quiet, not violent enough, I fear, for the bonbon girl. But I should very much like to have your impression of it from your practical experience.

If you feel that you can spare the time, I will send in a copy.

I have one to spare and you can take just as much time as you please.

Very truly yours,

GAMALIEL BRADFORD, JR.

The Bronson Howard "study" which appealed to him was an article of about two columns in length that I wrote for the Transcript immediately after the death of that popular but now forgotten playwright. As will be seen from Mr. Bradford's letter, my appraisal of Bronson Howard's work for the stage—which includes such plays as "The Banker's Daughter," "Young Mrs. Winthrop," "The Henrietta," "Shenandoah," and "Aristocracy"—was not enthusiastic, and now he is simply representative of an outworn aspect of the American drama. To that extent they reveal the characteristic quality of the plays of their day, and some of them may be found printed in more than one anthology.

Of Mr. Bradford's manuscript play, which he sent me to read, I regret to say that I have no remembrance, although I think that it must have been over the heads of the American public of the first decade of the twentieth century. Undoubtedly his forebodings of its reception by the dramatic agents who were often the intermediaries between the playwrights and the theatrical managers were well founded. It is fortunate that Mr. Bradford was forced to renounce his ambition to become an acted dramatist, for instead he gained great renown as an analyst of character in his psychographic essays on distinctive men and women of more than one country and one era.

\* \* \*

During the years when he was writing the Librarian columns weekly for the Transcript, I was in constant correspondence with Edmund Pearson, and it was a lively experience to receive and mull over his clever letters. I have kept all of them carefully, and they fill a large drawer in one of

my most precious cabinets. Here is one that reveals the difficulties under which he wrote while he was in the service of his country getting ready to go to war. He was not sent abroad, for his duties were to stay at home as "personnel officer," a position that compelled him to select others to be sent while he remained in a place of safety. Here is Pearson's letter:

May 2, 1917

DEAR MR. EDGETT,—

Since I wrote you I have passed the physical and other examination here, and have been recommended for the three months' camp at Plattsburg, beginning May 14. I may not know, however, until May 8, whether I have finally been accepted for it.

You can certainly count on copy from me for the next two or three weeks, and plenty of advance warning if I have to drop the work. I will see what I can do by way of following your suggestion as to a lot of copy to be used from time to time, with an occasional contribution from me whenever possible, and just as much original stuff as I can send,—that I will certainly work for. I did have a deuce of a time of it toward the end of the camp last summer,—writing on my rifle-stock, one day, sitting in a leaky wood-shed during a halt on the hike,—and the object of popular derision, as the "war correspondent." The difficulties of finding a place to write—where people will not continually fall over your legs—are stupendous.

Perhaps you had better begin the war-allowance of about a column a week, pretty soon.

Yours sincerely,

E. L. PEARSON

As it turned out, Pearson was able to continue the Librarian column throughout his war service, and he remained with us for some time after the end of the conflict, until he became so immersed in his researches into murders and their mysteries that he decided to give his entire time to them, becoming the author of "Studies in Murder,"

"Murder at Smutty Nose," the edited and annotated records of the Lizzie Borden Case, and similar books.

\* \* \*

Among the numerous letters I have received from Laura E. Richards is this pertinent one which came to me from the home in Maine where she has lived all these many years. Since its writing she has passed her ninetieth birthday.

GARDINER,  
Dec. 5, 1932

DEAR MR. EDGETT,

How delightful of you to say such pleasant things about "Tirra Lirra" in your Friday talk. And actually to read "Araby" to your great audience! I am naturally greatly pleased and "set up."

Some time I'll sing it to you; it sang itself into being with a rather quaint little tune, as many of my jingles do; that is why they jingle!

I had hoped greatly to see you when I was in Boston last month; but alas! a wandering germ caught me by the throat and put an end to all my pleasant plans. Better luck next time! With cordial thanks for your kind and friendly words, believe me always, dear Mr. Edgett,

Faithfully yours,  
LAURA E. RICHARDS.

Ps.

I read with deep interest your account of Michael Fairless. Since you do not confine your talks to books of the moment, I think I must send you my daughter Rosalind's "Northern Countryside." Not new at all; the second edition came out several years ago. The first edition was hailed with such delight by Mr. Howells, Theodore Roosevelt and others that I just think it has enduring qualities. I should be very happy if you felt some time like saying a word of it.

"Rosalind," said Mr. Sanborn to me once, his long forefinger extended—you remember how?—"has a certain literary quality which you do not possess!"

It is perfectly true!

And what do I hear you say about "the woman's postscript?"



Did I respond to Mrs. Richards's appeal about her daughter's book? I certainly did, especially as I found it filled with the scenic beauties and atmosphere of our own corner of New England. "It is a land," I said to my radio audience, "that may be compared to no other region, and it is really like no other region. It is literally the New England to which our fathers came in order to found what may now truthfully be said, without any attempt at blatant patriotism, to be the greatest nation in the world, second to none other, not even to its great fatherland." And that is so today, in spite of what has happened here during the last eight years. After quoting a brief passage from Miss Richards's book, I said of it that "this is the New England with which so many of us are familiar and which we know and understand thoroughly. 'A Northern Countryside' is an alluring title, and 'A Northern Countryside' is an alluring book." After all, it has always been to me invariably a great satisfaction to praise honestly a worthy book, its author and, in this instance especially, its author's mother.

\* \* \*

The choice of the following letter from my correspondence with Professor George C. D. Odell is made especially because it emphasizes the extent of his endeavors to make his "Annals of the New York Stage" a complete record, and also because it gives his estimate of the value of pictures and an unabridged index. In its eleventh volume, the number of its pictures is 352 and the index pages are 104. Ever since the publication of its first volume in 1927, I have watched its progress with unabated interest, marvelling at the enthusiasm with which its chronicle has been marching along through the years. It begins at the outset with the infancy of the American stage, and now in its eleventh volume it reaches the year 1882. There is more than half a century to come as it continues its approach to the stage of today and

tomorrow. This letter reveals its writer's thoroughness and unflagging courage:

HOTEL SEYMOUR  
50 WEST 45TH ST., NEW YORK  
May 10, 1937

MY DEAR MR. EDGETT,

I cannot tell you how highly I appreciate your kindness in sending me your very favorable review of the ninth volume of my *Annals*. I had not yet seen the review, and I naturally prized it as coming from its author.

I was especially pleased with your praise of the pictures and the index. The work on both was excruciating, but I feel that in such a book only the man who does the writing can successfully carry on the drudgery involved in the mechanical accompaniment of the printing. The things that especially hamper me now are the variety theatres and the German activities; they take up so much room and threaten ultimately to submerge the record. Yet I feel they must go in the story for that small group of supposititious inquirers who may be looking for just those items.

With renewed thanks for all your kindness, I am, as ever,

Very sincerely yours,

GEORGE C. D. ODELL

The entire work is a masterpiece of research and writing, for it is something more than a mere series of lists of persons, plays, theatres and productions. It is as good entertainment in its reading as it is effective as a chronicle, especially as Professor Odell makes it a significant part of the social history of the country as a whole.

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## *Epilogue*

IT SEEMS IMPOSSIBLE that at last I am about to give the signal for the fall of the curtain on the last scene of this drama of my life. I feel sure I am not exaggerating when I say that from act to act my stage has been filled with events and people, although I hope it has not seemed overcrowded as my readers have looked upon it. As I take a glance backward, I see more of what I have omitted than of what I have included. If I began to relate my story again, it could be made much longer and fuller, but I should not want to do that. It is sufficient unto the days and years it compasses.

When I began writing this chronicle, my wife and I were living in an old house which stands on grounds of about three quarters of an acre at 200 Pleasant Street, Arlington, and our years there had begun on June 2, 1908. Now we are living in a second-story apartment at 135 Pleasant Street in the same town, only about a quarter of a mile away. We decided quite suddenly upon this change not long after I had come to life following a fainting spell which left me unconscious for less than an hour, although the doctor told me I must stay in bed all day and possibly longer.

He also told me that I must change my hours of eating, and have my dinner at noon instead of at night. I tried this expedient two days, and no longer, for life would not be worth living to me to continue such an objectionable dietary

habit. This is the way in which I have always obeyed a physician's order, but I have survived in spite of, and perhaps because of, my frequent rebellions. I did obey him, however, when I was told that I must do no more outdoor work, such as digging and hoeing in the garden, pushing a lawn mower or wielding a snow shovel. This conduct was not so much a duty to my physician. It was because I was weary of the physical labor of which I had had an abundance for more than thirty years.

We thereupon held a family conference—that is, my wife and I held it, for she and I are our entire family, and we decided that we ought to change our mode of living, and settle in smaller quarters that would relieve us of the care and trouble of managing a large house and its outdoor surroundings. We called in a real estate agent, set our problem before him, and the place was miraculously sold in exactly two weeks. In the meantime we had had our eyes on a near-by apartment, leased it immediately, and moved on the 21st of November, and there we are, after a judicious disposal of a vast quantity of superfluous household things that had accumulated for forty years. They had to be given away, for they could not be sold.

The apartment into which we moved is a large one, we are glad to say, and we are enjoying our new life as if we had been there fifty years instead of less than a year. There the greater part of this book has been written. Our cares are not over, and never will be, but many of them are dreams of the past, and we go and come as we please, happy indeed that we had the courage and common sense to move when we could both move together.

Our future and our retrospect are now ours to command. My parting words are not my own words, but are the words of Shakspeare:

Men must endure  
Their going hence, even as their coming hither.



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